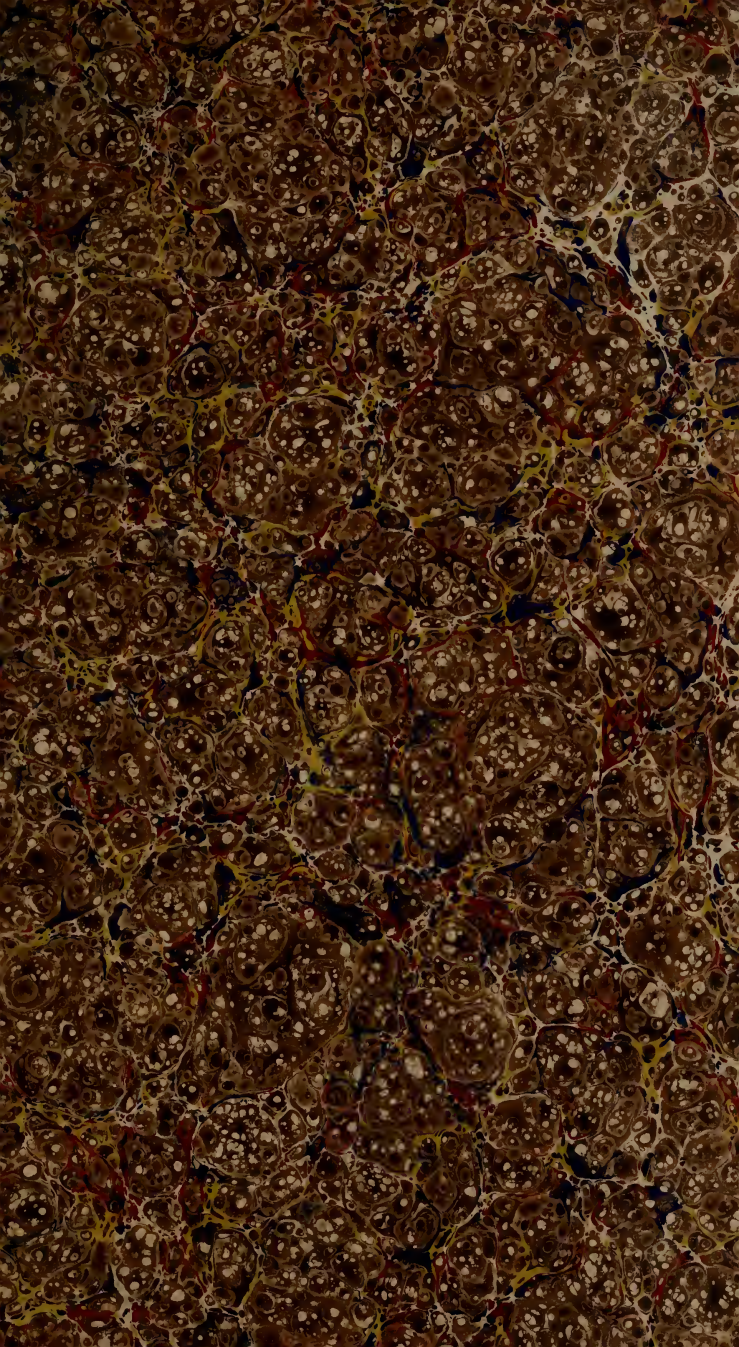




BOOKSTACKS









GREVILLE:

OR,

A SEASON IN PARIS.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"MRS. ARMYTAGE," "THE PEERESS," ETC.

Catherine Grace Frances (Moody) Gore

"Oh! English people,—English people!—why can you not stay
and perish of apoplexy and Yorkshire pudding at home?"—

PELHAM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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GREVILLE;

English

OR,

A SEASON IN PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

ARM.—Je lui ferais du mal volontiers !

SARA.—Mais il ne vous en a jamais fait ?

ARM.—Il faut bien que quelqu'un commence.

LES CLAQUEURS.

FROM that evening, the previous intimacy of the Earl with the family in the Rue St. Dominique seemed to ripen into warmer friendship. There was no drawback on his happiness. His mother had made it her urgent entreaty that he would prolong his stay in France,—being thoroughly possessed with the belief that Greville was intent upon hurrying to England, under the influence of a fatal passion for the pretty sister

of Massingberd; and thus released from all engagement with home, Greville was free to accept the enjoyments courting him on every side.

He was now as completely adopted into the society of the Faubourg, as Waverley into the Clan of Mac Ivor. He was now one of them. No one asked why he was there. Evil interpreters were satisfied that he was the lover of Madame de Rostanges,—fairer interpreters that he was the *prétendu* of her sister; and all, that he was a general favourite with all.—The worldly influence reviled by St. Sévron had effected the business. The priesthood of the Golden Calf had surrounded him with their pæans;—and though the “*ce charmant Lord Grévile*” was the theme of general praise; “*ce jeune mîlor avec son million de rentes*” was the object of still deeper idolatry. But that the intensity of his devotion to the Hotel de Rostanges was so clearly manifest, there would have been more than one attack upon his fidelity.

He was now scarcely ever apart from the sisters. In the summer season, it is so easy to

be together !—Winter serves to isolate people in their several households. An excuse seems wanted for defying inclemencies of weather for the mere purpose of a visit; and though the gay ball-room may open its nightly portals in spite of snow or rain, it is with a degree of pomp fatal to intimate enjoyment, and a degree of coldness arising from the interval of mornings spent asunder. In summer, on the contrary, instead of the thousands of roofs detaching the world into sullen fractions, one universal canopy seems to unite them into a single family. People live out of doors.—People meet, hand to hand,—walking,—riding,—in open carriages,—at fêtes,—in the ordinary promenades.—Society becomes more familiarly linked, nay, almost inseparable; nor is it till the close of the season dissolves the charm, that we become aware of the closeness of the intimacies that have sprung up; or of the earnestness of those affections, whose seed, germinating unnoticed, has sent forth a tree whose branches may overshadow our future destinies.

All was now excitement in the Faubourg.

Breakfasts, pic-nics, parties to Versailles, to St. Germain's,—on horseback, by railroad, by water, —served to vary the mornings, the evenings of which were devoted to unceremonious dancing to the piano.

The *grand monde* of Paris, if more formal in its politeness than that of London, is far easier in its habits of life. But it is also more excitable when once the epidemic of dissipation prevails. The young married women composing its coteries are, of course, freer to execute wild projects of diversion, than the young ladies of London controlled by elderly chaperons.

The Chantilly race-week at length arrived; and Greville, albeit too indolent to enjoy such a reckless chase after pleasure, found himself included in a party of *lions* and *lionnes*, headed by the Duchesse de St. Pierre, which took its departure at the close of a brilliant ball given by one of the loveliest women in Paris, allowing only time for the change of dress indispensable to the expedition. At the suggestion of his friends St. George and Fred Massingberd, and after the example of half the young men of his

acquaintance, he had sometime before engaged a commodious suite of rooms at the Hotel de Bourbon-Condé, for the race-week ; and, on the favourite day, the Rostanges family, too prudent to engage in the noisy party of Madame de St. Pierre, were to become his guests.

This pleasure was to be purchased, however, by two days' separation ; and Greville quitted Paris thoroughly out of humour. But after a refreshing drive through twenty miles of quiet corn-fields and vineyards, clothed with the tender verdure of the season, he could scarcely refuse a token of approval to the scenes of mingled courtliness, rurality, and sportsmanship, to which, in company with the Duchess and her attendant *lions*, he found himself transported. He was obliged,

Dans sa pompe élégante d'admirer Chantilly,
De héros en héros, d'age en age embelli ;

and though, in place of heroes, the high street of the little town was encumbered with dandies and jockeys of all nations and languages, doing a bit of sportsmanship on a miniature scale, —while at the window of every paltry lodg-

ing, stood lounging some well-known *flaneur* of Crémieux's or the Bouvelarts,—nay, though the palace of which he had heard so much, consisted only of a gigantic stable, sole relic of its departed grandeur and affording an absurd contrast to the adjoining chateau, Lord Greville was agreeably surprised by the elegance of a scene resembling our own Goodwood, Croxton Park, the Hoo, or Heaton, rather than the uproarious race-courses usually met with in the environs of a metropolis.

The charm of the first coup d'œil, however, soon subsided. The weariness of spirits caused by being up all night in a heated ball-room, was not improved by the bantering of Madame de St. Pierre, or the over-excitement of his sporting friends. He had little difficulty in escaping from the noisy group ; and while wandering listlessly over the course, comparing its gay dancing tents with the drinking booths of Epsom and gambling booths of Ascot, and admiring the long line of forest scenery skirting the horizon above the palace, he found himself suddenly accosted by the Comte de St. Sévron.

“ *Vous avez l'air complètement désorienté !* ”

said he. "Have the civility, my dear Lord, to put a better face upon the matter, nor let all the world perceive how miserably you are bored!"—

"*J'ai passé une nuit blanche !*" replied Greville, cordially accepting his offered hand. "I have not been in bed since Tuesday; yet dare not plead guilty of fatigue, while so many of your fair countrywomen who are in the same case with myself, shew such bright faces on the matter!"—

"You have found at least a plausible pretext for your *ennui*!"—cried St. Sévron. "But it does not impose upon me. I am aware how thoroughly our infant attempts at sportsmanship must provoke the contempt of a legitimate son of the turf,—a Meltonian,—a Newmarket man, like yourself."

"You do me too much honour, and too little!" cried Lord Greville, laughing. "*There* stand the only three Newmarket men present!"—he continued, pointing first to a little weazened jockey who was proceeding to the weighing-stand, and afterwards to Lord St. George and Fred, who, with the green cards of the Jockey

Club stuck ostentatiously in their hats, were lounging over the railings of the Tribune belonging to that erudite department of the sporting world.—“ You would blush for me, if I dared reveal my utter indifference towards all that relates to the turf ! ” —

“ But as a matter of fashion,—as a matter of *bon ton* ! ” —pleaded St. Sévron, with affected earnestness. “ I hope you don’t imagine that one in twenty of the bearded *lions* whom you see parading the course, per virtue of the magic green card which alone secures them admission, know a horse from a jackass, or have brains or arithmetic to compute the odds ? — I suspect that some of their ‘ books ’ might be placed as a curiosity in the British Museum ! — No, no, my dear Lord ! — A luxurious club-house, where we enjoy *gros jeu* and the best cook and billiard-table in Paris, constitutes our notions of jockeyism. I heard some notary’s daughter of Chantilly inquiring ingenuously just now of her papa, the meaning of the green cards ? — ‘ *Mais qu’est ce que c’est donc que les jockeis ?* ’ — ‘ *Ma chère amie, ce sont les roués les plus huppés de Paris,—voilà !* ’ —

replied papa, wisely putting horseflesh out of the question. As to the improvement of the breed of horses in France—" a gesture of contempt from St. Sévron filled up the sentence.

"In short, you are now commencing the game we began in Charles the Second's time," added Lord Greville; "and in spite of all that has been written by able hands from that day to this in praise and honour of horse-racing, I own I see little advantage in creating a race too fleet for any reasonable purpose. Massingberd swears this branch of my education has been so shamefully neglected, that I shall live to disgrace myself in good company by my ignominious ignorance. Certain it is, that if insured of a sufficient number of tolerable horses for my use, I care not how little I hear of the stable. My visit to Chantilly has any other object than the betting-stand."

"Degenerate Briton!"—cried St. Sévron, with a smile. "After your brilliant courses at Epsom and Ascot with their hundreds of thousands of spectators, and hundreds of thousands on the race, to pretend patience with our little

courtly bowling-green, with its miniature royal pavilion and *tribune des lionnes* !”—

“ *C’est à mettre sous verre !*”—replied Greville with a smile. “ With respect to the sport, it serves just as well to bet upon, I fancy, as the Derby or Leger—”

“ Or to bring people five-and-twenty miles to yawn at !—” added St. Sévron, on whom the ennui depicted in the blank countenance of poor Greville was not thrown away. “ On Sunday, by the way, all Paris will be here. *Tout ce qui se respecte un peu* must be at Chantilly on Sunday !”—

“ Our friends from the Rue St. Dominique among the rest,”—said Greville, more cheerfully, readily falling into the trap placed for him. “ I have rooms at the Bourbon, and they have promised to dine with me.”

“ Ah !—you are staying, then, at Chantilly ?—The most inveterate of the jockey club could do no worse !”—cried the Count.

“ I have an apartment in common with two determined sportsmen,” replied Greville, by way of excuse. “ But I shall not have courage

to loiter out my four days, *this* being, I am told, a favourable sample of the sport. What will the course be to-morrow, with the *tribune* of the *lionnes* deserted! — No Madame de St. Pierre, no Madame de la Roche Aymar!”—

“To *you*, I suspect, pretty much what it is to-day,”—interrupted St. Sévron,—“a blank, my Lord!—But don’t be so easily discouraged. On Saturday, they usually get up a *chasse*; or, if the weather be bad enough, (and there is as sure to be rain for Chantilly races as for Noah’s ark,) a pic-nic at Les Etangs.” Lord Greville started. “I allude to a *rendezvous de chasse* of that name, in the forest of Chantilly,” added St. Sévron, with a significant smile. “It was not my intention to startle you.”

“And *you*?”—interrupted Greville, in his turn; “since you have not zeal enough in the cause to wear your jockey card upon your sleeve, and since it is clearly not *dévouement* to *les princes* which brings you hither, (the Chaussée d’Antin, I conclude, furnishes the royal tent with the great unknown in crimson cravats who are paying their court so earnestly yonder to the

Duc de Nemours and Prince de Joinville!) may I ask what you are doing so far from head-quarters?"—

"You look upon me, I see, as a mere *badaud de Paris!*"—cried St. Sévron, laughing. "*J'accepte, mon cher,—j'accepte!*"—I confess I am very little better. But I have a little *bicoque* here on the skirts of the forest, of which I am expected to do the honours to my friends, when such occasions as Chantilly races put them in mind of its existence and mine. But for their engagements with you, Madame de Rosanges and Mademoiselle Eugénie would probably have honoured me with their company on Sunday. To-day, *je donne à diner* to the young Duc and Duchesse de Clermont, and one or two more who, though possessing the hippodromic organ and frequenting all the races in the environs of Paris, do not aspire to the honours of lionism."

"Alas! that I dare but throw over my own noisy dinner-party and entreat you to include me in yours!"—sighed Greville, already foreseeing the tumult likely to arise from a *mélange*

of English and foreign jockeys, smoking, singing, and running their races over again. “Enable me at least to bear to Monsieur de Rosanges, whom I shall see to-morrow in Paris, the welcome news that you will meet him at dinner on Sunday?”—

“You *do* return, then, to-night to Paris?”—cried St. Sévron; then, fearing his question might appear indiscreet, he hastily added—“Would that I could accept your tempting offer!—The proverb says, that those who don’t want to play the mountebank, should not exhibit themselves on *les tréteaux*; for once there, they must either act or be pelted!—So I, who have been vain enough to shew the capabilities of my house, must persist in my hospitality through the week, or have its windows broken. But here comes one of your inveterates!” he continued, as Massingberd, with a sullen face, and his hands thrust into the pockets of his white *paletot*, sauntered towards them.

“I am afraid you lost on the last race?” inquired Greville, who had been allowed to hear nothing for ten days past from Lord St. George

and Fred, but the state of the odds and of their books.

“Lost?—yes!—that is, unless the stewards pronounce an equitable decision and give it against the winner!”—cried Fred, doggedly. “We are unanimous,—the club is unanimous,—that is *all* but unanimous on the subject. Clermont, who has fifteen thousand on the race, swears he will not pay a sous till the question has been referred to the London jockey club.”

The Comte de St. Sévron slightly raised his eyebrows. He thought it singular that his friend the Duc de Clermont, the most French among the French, should propose to submit to English authority even in the matter of horse-racing.

“Clermont made it a particular request to me not to book up till he has had the matter properly investigated.—Wigson, the Newmarket jockey, tells us it is a hollow thing.—But they say Apperley is on the course?—I am looking everywhere for Apperley!—Apperley would decide it!”—

“The stewards, I should imagine, would de-

cide it," replied Greville, vexed at his pertinacity in talking English, and excluding St. Sévron from the conversation.

"The stewards!—The idea of submitting to have our pockets picked under the sanction of a set of snobs, who don't know half so much of the turf as an Eton boy!"—cried Fred, his temper evidently lost with his money. "I'm sorry for the Duke of Orleans!—To go to the expense and trouble of a stud, and have one's horses run at the discretion of such a pack of tailors, must be cursedly mortifying. As Clermont was saying just now, I'm damned sorry for the poor Prince Royal."—

St. Sévron was pretty nearly sure that his friend (who never called the Prince Royal otherwise than the Duc de Chartres) had said nothing of the kind. A moment afterwards, the St. James's-street dandy afforded him still further cause for amusement by the insolent stare with which he regarded a young Frenchman, of modest manners and somewhat homely costume, who, after courteously raising his hat to the two foreigners, entered into familiar con-

versation with himself. His coat not being a Blin nor his cravat a Boivin, Fred Massingberd saw fit to affect surprise at an act of civility usually addressed by high-bred Parisians, without formal introduction, to the intimates of their intimates.

Lord Greville, who was becoming a fluent Frenchman, entered cheerfully into the chat of St. Sévron with the new comer ; while Massingberd, big with an ineffable sense of superiority, took out a cigar, replaced his hands in the pockets of his *paletot*, and all but turned his back upon the party. It was impossible to embody more completely the empty insolence of exquisitism.

“ So you mean to dispute the issue of the last race ? ”—demanded St. Sévron of the new comer, who was, in fact, no other than the Duc de Clermont.

“ *I dispute ?—I had next to nothing on it, mon cher,—which next to nothing I have already paid,* ” replied Clermont. “ Some one belonging to the jockey club raised an objection to the entry, which was instantly overruled. But

what are we doing here? We shall see nothing of the next race, which is a crack one. Come with me, my dear St. Sévron, to the ladies' stand. There are several seats vacant behind the Duchess and Madame de St. Pierre. You belong, I fancy, to her party?"—he continued, courteously addressing Greville. "Perhaps you will do me the favour to join us?"—

Before he reached the end of his speech, Massingberd had taken himself off to the stables; there to vent his mortification at having been convicted of a pitiful meanness, by swearing manfully at every trainer, and kicking every dog that came in his way!—His savage humour did not escape the notice of his jockey associates, who decided that Monsieur de Masanbert could neither lose his money like a man, nor pay it like a gentleman; and after a gay dinner given that day, at the close of the sport, by the Amphytrion of *les lions*, the epitaph originally written for Mirabeau's father was inscribed by some unknown hand on the room-door he occupied at the Hotel de Bourbon Condé:

Ci-git F. M.—blagueur et brutal,
Qui jurait bien et qui payait mal !—

The ingratiating manners of his more polished countryman, meanwhile, recommended him so rapidly to the friendship of the good-humoured Clermont and his pretty wife, that Lord Greville had little difficulty in persuading the Duke and Duchess to accompany St. Sévron without ceremony to the dinner-party he was to give to their mutual friends from the Rue St. Dominique.

“ *Un diner ?—un diner prié ?* ”—cried the Duke. “ I am half afraid !—On the last day of the races, it is the custom here to run a little into excess ! — I suspect you mean to endanger the safety of our return to Paris ? ”

“ No fear ! ”—replied Greville, in the same tone. “ We will all take our sober departure together, immediately after dinner.”

Nothing could be more satisfactory than to have secured for Sophie and her sister, a party so much to their taste as the Clermonts and St. Sévron. It was the first time they had been his guests, since the memorable epoch

which brought them together at the Golden Lion!

“ I am fated to do the honours of my table to them at some dirty inn !”—murmured the Earl, surveying with disgust the shabby apartments for which he was paying the price of Mivart’s *appartement des Princes*. “ No matter ! On Sunday, these miserable rooms, which will seem more brilliant to *me* than the finest palace in Europe, shall be rendered worthier their reception.”

From the days of Boccaccio’s Federigo accordingly, down to those of the *fermier général*, who, in the month of March, fed upon forced green peas the cow that was to afford milk for the lady of his love,—never was hero of romance so luxurious in his celebration of the rites of hospitality !—Already, Chevet and Tortoni were beginning to inquire the nation and language of the new Demidoff, at whose orders their *magazins* were put under requisition without regard to cost or care.

But if Greville looked forward with satisfaction to the promised party, his friends in the

Rue St. Dominique were scarcely less delighted. Neither Sophie nor her sister had ever visited Chantilly, or witnessed more of sporting pleasures than is afforded by the sandy desert of a race-course in the Champs Elysées; and now, with childlike eagerness, Madame de Rostanges anticipated the pastimes of the day, while with womanly sensibility, Eugénie thought only of its pleasures.—From the period of Lady Cobham's visit to Paris, Mademoiselle de Nangis had begun to form a different estimate of the attentions of Lord Greville. To his pretty country-woman, his demeanour had been as assiduous as to her sister. It was probably the custom of his country to display this specious gallantry. They had perhaps attributed undue importance to his attentions to Sophie; perhaps mistaken the nature of his sentiments for herself!—

“There is between us such entire sympathy of tastes and opinions,” argued Eugénie, “that were a mutual understanding once established, I could not long be an object of indifference in his eyes. Yet freely as I talk with others, in *his* presence, I become embarrassed!—When

Greville is conversing with my sister, on questions in which circumstances have rendered me better informed than Sophie, I dare not utter a syllable!—I, so reckless,—so wilful,—become abashed by the presence of one who is himself more timid than a girl!—My sister laughs and talks with him,—Madame de St. Pierre,—Madame de la Roche Aymar,—all of them;—and with *them* he is amiable and lively. Oh! that I could overcome this foolish reserve!—for how can he ever like me, whom he sees only in the silent sullen mood that offers so little encouragement to friendship?—I will try to do better!—I will try to appear before him in my real character. In the country, people are more at their ease. At Les Etangs, all will go well. Meanwhile, the *gêne* inseparable from the *salon* of the Hotel de Rostanges, may possibly be dispelled by the excitement of our charming expedition to Chantilly.—There,—there—at least, I shall enjoy a day of happiness!”—

CHAPTER II.

Corbleu !—dit le chevalier,—cette fois je vous ai guéri de votre damnée habitude de cérémonies.

P. DE MUSSET.

MEANWHILE, in spite of the obstacles thrown in their way by the assiduities of inn-keepers and officiousness of couriers, the travelling party from the Hotel Bristol reached Calais and crossed the water in safety. It was almost too much for the systematic good breeding of Lady Greville to bear to the end, without an outbreak of temper, the sulkiness of Sir James Cobham and the still more provoking equanimity of his wife. But it afforded some

consolation to know that, thanks to her prudence, her idolized son was now in safety.

Any accidental spectator of her ladyship's arrival at Greville Abbey,—rich, beautiful, luxurious Greville Abbey,—with all its charms of scenery,—all its refinements of accommodation,—all its tribes of menials, chariots and horsemen,—might have supposed that the destinies of the Countess left her little in *need* of consolation. Her triumphs as legislatress over the estate, did, indeed, for a time, almost compensate her vexations as a mother. Dowdeswell had done wonders during her absence,—that is, wonders in strictly obeying her commands. The park, the gardens, were in their utmost beauty,—a beauty how enhanced by comparison with the uncouth pleasure-grounds of other countries!

Never had the soft green turf, the venerable timber trees, appeared so lovely in her sight. The gardens too,—the gardens of her own creation,—were indescribably beautiful, after the formal parterres of the Continent. Yet, at the close of a week's survey, she began to find that

the spot of which she had sacrificed so much to secure the undivided sway, no longer sufficed for her enjoyment. The stir and movement of her recent life had created new inclinations. Like other proprietors of grand places in the country, of which they are occasionally allowed unmolested enjoyment, she discovered, in short, that the abbey, if very beautiful, was wretchedly dull.

“After all, I should be ten times happier if on a visit to my son, and surrounded by his wife and family!”—was her secret reflection. “If Hugo had not formed this unlucky attachment to Lady Cobham, I would have prevailed upon him to spend the remainder of the summer at the abbey. But I must not think of it! At present, there would be too much danger in his return to England! The moment he arrived here, I should have that designing woman come and settle herself at Hill Hall.”

“Well! my dear Mrs. Massingberd!—what do you say *now* concerning the friend of your own condition in life?”—inquired the old gentleman of his wife, about a month after the

re-installation of the Countess at Greville Abbey. "Pray has she returned your visit?"—

No answer!—

Mrs. Massingberd continued to ply her knitting needles, as if absorbed in the occupation.

"I asked you, my dear, whether Lady Greville had called here since her return?" repeated her husband in a louder key.

"I told you last week, Mr. Massingberd,—No!"

"I thought she might have driven over since. Has not she even sent a card?"—

"A card!—a card would be a positive affront, considering the terms on which we stand!"

"Not much worse, perhaps, than taking no notice of you at all," rejoined the provoking husband.

"Her ladyship may, perhaps, still suffer from the fatigues of her journey. At all events, she must have a thousand pressing occupations after so prolonged an absence from home," replied Mrs. Massingberd, with studied formality.

"Pho, pho!—ladyships with forty thousand a

year at their disposal, are seldom troubled with very urgent occupations," cried the obstinate old gentleman. "After directing the groom of the chambers whereabouts to stick the new antiques, pots and pans from Herculaneum, corals and shell-work from Naples, and gaudy pendules from Paris, which I have no doubt she has been goose enough to bring over, what on earth has Lady Greville to do, except recollect the civilities due to her country-neighbours? Didn't I always tell you the woman had no more heart than a cucumber?"—

"I suspect it is because she has too *much* heart that Lady Greville has so singularly delayed her visit to Hill Hall!" cried Mrs. Massingberd. "Lady Greville feels conscious of having acted ungraciously towards the Cobhams."

"Ungraciously?—Why, you have been always preaching to me about her ladyship's wonderful civilities to Julia at Naples,—and kindness to Julia at Milan,—and affection for Julia at Paris."—

“ Yes ! but not *since* !—I said nothing of her conduct to Julia in London, because I thought it might exasperate you.”

“ Her conduct to Julia in London exasperate *me* !—Not it !—Julia has got a stout fellow of a husband to fight her battles, and one who takes good care of her, too, unless I’m much mistaken. And as I’m certain the poor girl herself hasn’t spirit to hurt a fly, I am not afraid that even such a cat-o’-mountain as your friend Lady Greville could be provoked into *very* hard usage of her.”

“ Not when I assure you that she never took the slightest notice of her from the moment of their arrival in town ?”—

“ I suppose Ju didn’t make herself agreeable on the journey. She never had much to say for herself, poor thing !”

“ And *that* you think sufficient reason for Lady Greville to cut a person with whom she had been living for months on terms of the most intimate friendship ?”

“ Why *did* my daughter live with her, pray,

on terms of the most intimate friendship? If people *will* form connexions out of their own sphere of life—”

“ Sir James Cobham’s wife, Mr. Massingberd, is in a sphere of life to form connexions with the first people in the land!”

“ Ay!—and to be cut by them afterwards! But has Julia no idea, pray, of the motive of her particular friend’s very particular impertinence?”

“ Not the least in the world.”

“ Then depend upon it the old lady is a little cracked!” said the irreverent Mr. Massingberd. “ Most female despots grow crazy with too much power or cherry bounce, before they come to an end;—Queen Bess,—Queen Anne,—Queen Cat of Russia,—Queen ——”

“ I have, however, my *suspitions*!”—interrupted Mrs. Massingberd, knitting away in double quick time, and paying no attention to her husband’s harangue.

“ Suspitions are ugly things, my dear; make ’em over to me, and get quit of ’em!”

“ I am pretty nearly sure,” resumed the lady, in a confidential tone, “ that Lady Greville fancies her son has attached himself to our poor dear, simple, unoffending Julia !”

“ I should have thought *that* was an idea more likely to have ruffled the temper of my friend Cobham !” —replied old Massingberd, with a chuckling laugh. “ But what makes you think so—eh ?”

“ Because Julia requested me not to allude to Lady Greville’s conduct in my letters,—a proof that she attributes it to some motive likely to be displeasing to her husband.”

“ Very shrewdly guessed, my dear, for a woman of your years and faculties !” cried Mr. Massingberd, much amused. “ It’s a pity but what we could have your luminous assistance on the bench, at our quarter sessions ! All I can tell you is, however, that if Mrs. Upper crust, of Greville Abbey, *does* believe her son to be in love with Lady Cobham, or lady anybody else, she never was more plaguily mistaken in her life !”

“ Why, what can you possibly know about the matter, Mr. Massingberd? Lady Cobham is one of the prettiest young women in England. Her portrait might have been in the Book of Beauty if Sir James would have allowed it; and at Naples ——”

“ At Naples I have little doubt, my dear, that Vesuvius exhibited a new flame in her honour! But depend on it no Englishwoman, however pretty, has the smallest chance against those jades the French, who, from the days of Sterne’s *grisette* till now, have such a deuced winning way with them, that ——”

“ You fancy Lord Greville attached, then, to some one at Paris?”—interrupted Mrs. Massingberd, coming anxiously to the point.

“ No, I don’t fancy any such thing,—I know it!—Fred’s letters have talked of nothing else these three weeks past!”

“ That is the reason, then, you have been so vastly cautious never to shew them to me!”—cried Mrs. Massingberd, little suspecting that her husband’s caution arose from his desire to con-

ceal from her knowledge certain pecuniary demands on the part of his son and heir, connected with his engagements in the Rue Grange Batelière.

“Fred seems amused beyond measure at finding the sanctity of the demure, decorous young Earl of Greville melt away like wax in the sun, under the bright eyes of one of their tiptop *femmes à la mode*!”

“A married woman!”—interrupted Mrs. Massingberd, dropping her work and taking off her spectacles. “How dreadful!—My dear Mr. Massingberd, *do* tell me all about it!—But how came it that Julia said nothing of all this?”—

“The Cobhams were only two days in Paris, and are beetle-blind, I trust, to all such delicate little affairs. Fred assures me that even Lady Greville saw no more of what was going on, than if she had passed under Paris in a tunnel!”

“Poor woman! I really feel for her!” sighed Mrs. Massingberd, with a hypocritical elevation of her hands and eyes.

“What ! after behaving so like a brute to your poor, dear, simple, unoffending Julia?—No, no,—she has only got her deserts ! She chose to debar her son the right use of his faculties, and so he has taken to the wrong one. A couple of years hence, when he comes of age, Lady Greville will be trotted off from the Abbey to make way for a family of threadbare French adventurers, who will help the young man to make ducks and drakes of his fine fortune, and laugh at his folly when they have come to the bottom of the money-bag !”

Even the maternal ire and neighbourly indignation of Mrs. Massingberd were almost appeased by so lamentable a picture. Her resolution, however, was taken. It would have required virtue more heroic than she possessed or than Lady Greville deserved, had she abstained from enjoying the triumph of such an occasion. Having extracted, therefore, from her husband with the art which most women possess, even when old and ugly, the details contained in the successive letters of her son,

away she drove, on the morrow, to Greville Abbey, on old Massingberd's express understanding that she required the horses for a neighbourly visit to the vicarage.

An answer of "not at home" would probably have been dispatched to the well-known Hill Hall carriage, as it entered the antique gateway of the vast courtyard which might have inspired awe in a less determined spirit; but *there*, just issuing from the stables, stood the barouche and four of Lady Brooks, a fatal announcement that morning visitors had been already admitted.

All, therefore, the Countess could do in the way of insulting the mother of the detested Lady Cobham, was to treat her with the most formal civility; and, having desired that Mrs. Massingberd might be shewn into the state drawing-room, a cold, pompous, magnificent apartment, she resumed her friendly leave-taking with Lady Brooks, in the snug, comfortable, morning room opening to the lawn, in which they had been chatting over a recent revolt in

the corporation of her son's borough of Squeamington.

Mrs. Massingberd, meanwhile, perceiving through the Elizabethan windows overlooking the courtyard that the carriage enriched with coronets and supporters, and the footmen befooled with tints of crimson and yellow, still stood there, putting out the shine of her own whited-brown equipage and liveries, perfectly understood how she was treated. She resolved, however, to be cool; and certes, if any atmosphere could favour such a resolution, it was that of the frigid state-chamber whose gilding was never exposed to the cheering influence of sun or air, in the midst of which the little old lady, in her grey bonnet and shawl, sat, looking like a marmozet chained to the blue satin ottoman.

But she sat contented, for she knew that her turn was coming. The profound curtsy with which Lady Greville advanced to receive her, as the carriage of the lady of *her* own condition of life drove out of the courtyard, had no effect on Mrs. Massingberd. Triumph

twinkled in her eyes,—victory sat upon the curls of her towy toupée. The Countess of Greville might be the greatest lady in the county;—but at that moment, *she* had the best of it!—

Provoked beyond measure, meanwhile, that her previous insults were not resented, and that she was forced to receive her at all, Lady Greville looked as if she could have killed the intruder; but resolved, as in nobility bound, to kill her with the golden bodkin of affability. She inquired with the most measured politeness after Mr. Massingberd, and every thing and everybody else connected with Hill Hall;—then began talking county politics on the strength of the intelligence just communicated by Lady Brooks, with a degree of queenly dignity rendering it exceedingly difficult for the country neighbour to digress from the corporation of Squeamington in Oxfordshire, to the Hotel de Rostanges in the Rue St. Dominique.—But Mrs. Massingberd's resolution was stout, and she bided her time.

“I trust,” she observed, when the Countess

had enlarged to the utmost upon the extreme friendship evinced by Lord Brooks in the care of the borough interests of the house of Greville,—
“ I trust it will not be *very* long before we have Lord Greville himself amongst us again to assist in these anxious duties.”

“ I beg your pardon,” replied Lady Greville, abruptly. “ My son has not the smallest idea of returning to England. It may be months first,—it may be years.”—

“ I am truly sorry to hear it,” replied Mrs. Massingberd with an elongated face.

“ My son has derived so much advantage from his sojourn on the Continent, that I wish him to make the tour of Europe before he finally settles in England.” (The tour of Europe, the Countess thought, would sound like a threat of eternal separation, when repeated by Mrs. Massingberd in her next letter to Cobham Park !)

“ I am sure, I trust, you may never have cause to regret his Lordship’s long alienation from his native country,”—said Mrs. Massingberd, in a solemn tone. “ At *his* time of life—”

“At his time of life, it is natural that young men should desire to see something of the world,” interposed the Countess, with *hauteur*. “The late Lord Greville, having had occasion to regret through life that he had become too soon his own master, chose to prolong the minority of his son beyond the usual limit. Hugo has consequently less to render peremptory his residence in England, than other young noblemen of his years.”

“That is certainly *some* extenuation,” observed Mrs. Massingberd, mysteriously ;—“some *little* extenuation !”—

“Besides,” added Lady Greville, scarcely noticing the interruption, “Greville has a decided preference for foreign society.”

“I am only too well aware of it !”—answered Mrs. Massingberd, in still more lugubrious accents.

“From the time of our quitting England,” pursued Lady Greville, intent only on speaking daggers to the mother of the presumptuous Lady Cobham,—“I could scarcely prevail upon

him to shew proper attention to my English friends. It was only at *my* suggestion, indeed, that he continued to keep up with them the ordinary forms of acquaintanceship."

"*That* I can scarcely wonder at, considering the peculiar claims upon his time," observed Mrs. Massingberd, with increasing significance ; "for I understand that the family spent the winter in Italy."

Lady Greville did *not* quite understand the *deduction* ; the lady of Hill Hall seemed a little more addle-pated than usual.—"In short, I look upon him as wedded to Paris," she resumed, in order to give Mrs. Massingberd time for the disentanglement of her ideas.

"Not exactly to Paris," said the malicious grey 'marmoset, affecting an indulgent smile. "Indeed, I was not aware that matters were so far advanced as for the wedding to be talked of. My son assures us that, though a few indulgent friends believe Lord Greville to be engaged to Ma'mselle Nangiss, the majority are of opinion his real attachment is to Madam Roast Anje."

“Mademoiselle de Nangis?—Madame de Rostanges?” ejaculated Lady Greville, not immediately seizing the names as pronounced by the Oxfordshire squireess, and perplexed by the indistinctness of her reminiscences of Paris, save those connected with the Oxfordshire squireess’s daughter.

“I allude to Madam la Marquise de Roast Anje!” repeated Mrs. Massingberd, her eyes brightening as she saw that her double-barrels had not missed their aim; “and to her sister, Ma’m selle Eugénie de Nangiss.”

“I had the pleasure of being introduced to them both in Paris,” faltered Lady Greville, striving to retain her self-possession.

“I understand, they are charming women,” observed Mrs. Massingberd, gathering herself up into reserve, now that she knew information would be demanded of her.

“But surely Mr. Frederick Massingberd does not imagine,—does not insinuate,”—said Lady Greville, gasping for breath, and unable to articulate the question she dreaded to hear an-

swered, while Mrs. Massingberd, instead of kindly anticipating her wishes, assumed exactly the same dignified composure affected by the Countess herself, on her first entrance into the saloon;—"your son does not positively say," cried Lady Greville, at length, impatiently forcing herself to be explicit, "that Greville has entangled himself in—in any disgraceful attachment?"—

"By no means," mildly replied Mrs. Massingberd. "Ma'mselle de Nangiss is a well-born young lady, I presume; and though a catholic, and brought up no doubt in habits very different from what one might desire in a wife for one's son,—above all, a son placed in so responsible a situation as Lord Greville,—yet I have heard no particular objection raised either against her family or her character."

"Her character!"—reiterated the almost agonized Lady Greville.

"And I have no doubt, my dear ma'am," pursued Mrs. Massingberd, growing familiar as she watched the disturbed countenance of her

victim,—“ I have no doubt that should Lord Greville bring you home this foreign daughter-in-law, (for which the predilections to which you just now referred, cannot fail to have prepared you,) you will find her little less amiable and companionable than any one of the young English ladies of high descent and accomplishments whom he might have selected to become Countess of Greville.”

This last taunt was lost upon the astounded mother. Absorbed in deep and bitter reflexions, she was retracing all the circumstances of her brief sojourn in Paris,—all the details of her transient acquaintance with the family of Rosanges,—all her groundless jealousies of Lady Cobham,—all Lord Greville’s duplicity with herself!—She took no further heed of the visitor whom, half an hour before, she had treated with such elaborate formality. She scarcely recollected that a Mrs. Massingberd remained in the room,—that a Mrs. Massingberd existed in the world!—

Engaged?—about to be married?—to a

foreigner, a Frenchwoman?—One who—but no! such a marriage was impossible! How was it to be borne?—or rather, how was it to be prevented?—

Rising abruptly from the gilded fauteuil in which she had been seated in solemn state opposite to her visitor, Lady Greville began to trace, with hurried footsteps, the vast area of the gorgeous saloon in which she had chosen to receive Mrs. Massingberd, in order to impose upon Lady Cobham's mother by an awful show of dignity.—And to what was she now degraded!—How miserable a specimen of the weakness of human nature did she afford;—governed by a master passion,—her moistened brow and compressed lips affording tokens of the grievous emotions struggling in her mind!—

Had Mrs. Massingberd possessed force of character to enter into the torments of such a trial, she would almost have pitied Lady Greville. But hardness of heart is more inseparable from narrowness of mind than most people allow; and, after several vain attempts to obtain

a few civil words at parting from the woman she had come expressly to drive out of her senses, the malicious old lady curtsied herself out of the room, and went on her way rejoicing.

CHAPTER III.

A quel théâtre va-t'-il aujourd'hui ?
Quel divertissemens prépare-t'-on pour lui ?
Où soupe-t'-il ? Quels sont ses convives ?
S'en ira-t'-il toujours avec des ducs et pairs
S'ennuyer en cérémonie ?
Lui permet'-on de voir la bonne compagnie ?

DELILLE.

“ HERE she is at last, I protest !”—muttered old Massingberd, when, the following morning, soon after breakfast, the Greville Abbey carriage drove up to the gate of Hill Hall. “ I was in hopes we had seen the last of her !—What on earth can bring the woman here at this untimely hour ?—Well, my dear, haven't you the spirit to say ‘ not at home ’ to the lady, of your own

condition of life, who insulted your poor, dear, simple, unoffending Julia?"—

Mrs. Massingberd neither answered nor stirred. Satisfied that her husband's abhorrence of the Countess would carry him hobbling out of the room before Lady Greville made her appearance, she had little fear that her visit to the Abbey of the preceding day would be brought to light, with all its treasons and malignities. As she expected, the skirts of the old gentleman's flowered dressing-gown, whisking through an opposite door, were alone visible to the Countess when, after due announcement, she entered the room.

No attempt at affability *now*,—no insolent pretensions!—Humiliated, saddened, almost overwhelmed, it was clear that she had passed a sleepless night; so heavily had the hand of care laid its leaden weight upon her usually passionless brow.

"I fear you will think me an intruder," said she, in a low hurried voice, to Mrs. Massingberd, treating her almost as if she mistook her for a woman of sense and feeling. "I feel that

I have been remiss lately in attentions towards you. Mistakes — painful mistakes, — which I could hardly explain without vexation to both, have led me into—but we will talk no further of it. To be candid, I am here in the hope of obtaining further information upon the subject on which we were conversing yesterday. If it were not taking too great a liberty, I would ask the favour of being allowed to see Mr. Frederick Massingberd's recent letters to his family."

"Liberty!"—"Favour!"—a liberty taken, a favour asked of the lady of Hill Hall by the lady of Greville Abbey!—Mrs. Massingberd had the baseness to feel inexpressibly gratified.—

"I fear," said she, discreetly lowering her voice lest it should reach the adjoining library, "that, as my son corresponds solely with his father (who is very scrupulous on such points), it will be impossible for me to comply with your ladyship's request. I am conscious indeed that I have already done wrong in unguardedly betraying the confidence reposed in me."

"You will at least not refuse to tell me," said Lady Greville, pale with anxiety, "your own

conviction concerning this unhappy business? Do you infer from your son's letters that Hugo is engaged to marry Mademoiselle de Nangis; or do you rather believe that he only entertains a criminal attachment for her sister?"

"*Only* entertains!"—repeated the decorous Mrs. Massingberd, with becoming horror. "Does your ladyship really mean that you would prefer Lord Greville being engaged in a criminal intrigue, to believing him engaged in marriage to a virtuous young woman?"

"The one evil at least is retrievable!" replied Lady Greville, who had no time to lose in hypocrisy. "But you have not answered me?"—

"Your ladyship must excuse me. I am really no great judge of such delicate questions," replied Mrs. Massingberd, primly. "I know so little of the world—particularly of the great world—*more* particularly of the French great world!"—

"But Frederick Massingberd is a man of the world!" cried Lady Greville, impatiently. "He lives exclusively with my son"—at a less painful moment she would have longed to add—"on my son."

“As far as Frederick’s opinion goes for any thing, then,” replied Mrs. Massingberd, “all I can say is, that in his first letters he spoke of Lord Greville’s foolish engagement to a French *girl*,—and that he now talks of Lord Greville’s foolish passion for a French *woman*. He mentioned, in a letter which we received this morning, some races that are about to take place; after which, he says, he shall return home for a glimpse of the London season;—for that ‘Grev’ (so his lordship, your son, is called among his intimates) that ‘Grev is going to spend the summer in Normandy with the people who have got hold of him.’”

“I am satisfied!—I have a thousand thanks to offer for the information you have afforded me,”—said Lady Greville, abruptly rising to ring for her carriage. It was in vain that Mrs. Massingberd entreated her to prolong her visit. “Mr. Massingberd would be in shortly,—luncheon would be served in a moment.”—The Countess wanted no luncheon,—no Mr. Massingberd.—All she wished was to be at home again,—at home in her own kingdom,—in the

kingdom perhaps about to be taken from her ; that she might collect her scattered thoughts, and dispatch by that day's post a letter to Lord Greville, calculated to startle him into a sense of his folly.

To write as she felt, was a thing foreign to the habits of Lady Greville ; to write *to her son* as she felt, a weakness she had never indulged, even when he was an Eton boy ! On the present occasion, therefore, there was little fear that she would burst forth into demonstrations of the storm raging in her bosom. On the contrary, though she sat down to write with a hand trembling so violently that her pen scarcely left a trace upon the satin paper, the faint lines contained only expressions of affection, embodying a request that Greville would return to England with the least possible delay, as she was suffering under a recurrence of the nervous disorder which had necessitated her removal to Naples the preceding year.

No reproaches,—no invectives,—no accusations of deception practised upon her,—no allusion to his attachment. “Come to me, my

dearest Hugo,—come to your suffering mother ere it be too late !” wrote Lady Greville. And she knew that unless her son were changed indeed, *such* an appeal must be irresistible.

For a moment, she felt inclined to have the information of her illness conveyed to Lord Greville by the hand of Anodyne the apothecary, rather than by her own. Such a missive would unquestionably prove more startling. But though Anodyne was quite as well prepared to swallow any dirty order issued by the Countess, as the Countess’s grooms and housemaids to swallow the nasty potions prepared for them by Mr. Anodyne, so that he would have announced her ladyship to be dying of the plague or the cholera, had these disorders suited her ladyship’s convenience, Lady Greville judged it inexpedient to place him in her confidence. Like other potentates of modern times, she had not faith in her ministers to intrust them with any duty she could perform with her own hand.

The letter was accordingly written, dispatched, and on its way to the Hotel des Princes, bearing the superscription of “*très pressé,*” that

it might be forwarded should Lord Greville be in the country, at the very time when Frederick Massingberd, (little suspecting the mischiefs created by certain episodes in certain letters to Hill Hall, requiring an extension of his credit with Laffitte) was puffing his cigar into the face of St. Sévron and the Duc de Clermont.

On the following day, unable to support his banishment from the society of the Hotel de Rostanges, to that of the mere sportsmen and would-be sportsmen of the least sportsman-like nation in the world, Greville returned, immediately after the races, to Paris.

His unexpected arrival was welcomed at the Hotel de Rostanges with a cry of joy.

“We are *not* to visit you, then, at Chantilly to-morrow?”—said Madame de Rostanges, apprehensive that the party at the Hotel de Bourbon was broken up.

“I am come to Paris solely to remind you of your engagement. I return to-morrow.”

“How kind of you,—how considerate!” exclaimed the Marchioness. “And to think that we might have missed you!—I have been only

five minutes returned from an evening drive in the Bois; and am preparing to go out."

"May I not be permitted to accompany you?"—inquired Greville, conceiving, from the simplicity of her dress, that she was about to repair to the Théâtre Français,—the only theatre frequented by the ladies of the Faubourg.

"Our friends are always happy to receive you," replied Madame de Rostanges. We are going to the Hotel de St. Pierre."

"You ought to apprise Lord Greville, interposed Mademoiselle de Nangis, "that he will have to support the *ennui* of a dowager party,—the Saturday *boston* of old Madame de Rostanges."

"The Marchioness resides, then, with her daughter?" inquired Greville, intent only upon the beautiful face on which his eyes were riveted; while Sophie proceeded to explain, that the Marquis, being one of the *habitués* of his kinswoman, had repaired to her soirée at the time they had set forth for their evening drive.

It would have amazed Fred Massingberd and

Lord St. George, who were at that moment quaffing Lord Greville's Chambertin to his health, amid shouts of laughter and piquant allusions, to have witnessed with what delight he was proceeding to a dowager party in the Faubourg; composed, according to Lord St. George's former description, of two quinquets, a few glasses of *eau sucrée*, and old women, male and female, *à discrétion*.

The Marquise de Rostanges, a woman venerable alike from age and character, occupied an *entresol* over the brilliant *rez de chaussée* of the Hotel St. Pierre. According to the French custom which unites the mother and only child till death does them part, this distribution had been made on the marriage of Claire de Rostanges with the Duc de St. Pierre; and, unsatisfactory as such arrangements prove in England, in France they are felt to contribute to the happiness and respectability of all parties.

The Marchioness, a woman of serious habits, was never seen in the gay assemblies of her daughter; nor was the Duchess invariably pre-

sent at the sober parties, uniting weekly round the old lady persons of her own age and opinions. But there never passed a day of which some portion was not devoted by Claire to her mother. Amid all her gaieties, all her dissipations, *that* duty was never neglected ; and it was perhaps owing to the restraining influence of that grave mother's precepts and example, that, notwithstanding the coquetry of Madame de St. Pierre, and the dangers to which it exposed her, she was still worthy the praise lavished on her by her cousin Sophie, as the best of wives and mothers.

The dowager, on the other hand, obtaining from her daughter's society the enlivenment of which she stood in need, experienced no temptation to intrude into gayer scenes unsuitable to her age. Nothing more rare, indeed, than to see a Parisian fête disfigured by the presence of a woman advanced in years. No palsied dowagers, as in London, dishonouring the name they bear by the exhibition of their wrinkles, their rouge, and their unreverend weakness for the things of this world ! Satisfied

that every age has its appointed pleasures, and reconciled by the deference of their families to resign the frivolous dissipations of the world, they retire with decency from the stage, to make way for a younger generation.

“I fear you were scarcely aware into what a cabinet of antiques our dear Sophie was introducing you?”—said the old Marchioness, when courteously welcoming Lord Greville. “But for her presence here, and that of Eugénie, we should almost forget the existence of youth and beauty. You are very kind to come and assist us in retaining the remembrance. What news do you bring from Chantilly?—what of the sport?—what of my daughter?”

Lord Greville, with prompt good breeding, supplied to the cheerful gracious old lady the details she demanded; and as they sat talking apart, the Marquis de Rostanges, who was engaged at profound whist with the Princesse de Chaulieu and two peers of France, (whose bald heads had probably escaped the perils of the first revolution,) looked up to salute Lord Greville with a friendly sign of the hand. At the

three *boston* tables occupying the remainder of the sober but elegant little saloon, no one was tempted to neglect the interests of the game to gaze at the newly arrived party. They took it for granted that it was some part or portion of their usual circle,—their unvarying circle. Strangers never entered there. All present were united among themselves by ties of consanguinity,—friendship,—or the old acquaintanceship so well replacing both. They had formerly assembled round the Marchioness in the Rue St. Dominique; they now assembled round her in the Rue de Varennes. There was her uncle the Bishop of A——; there was his brother the old Count de Nangis, guardian of Sophie and Eugénie; there were the elder branches of the houses of Castries, Mortémart, Caraman, Vaudreuil, Gontaut, Cossé, Noailles, Galifet, and others of the legitimist party, in whom Lord Greville fancied he could discern a refinement of manner and air of distinction now almost extinct.

There was something in the intonation of their voices, characteristic of persons trained

from infancy in observance of the gentler courtesies of life. There was something in their countenances indicative of the exercise of intellect in conversation, rather than in research. No deep furrows resulting from reflection,—no intellectualization of the eye from habitual self-interrogation. But, in their place, the shrewd glance,—the rapid smile,—the intelligent play of countenance,—consequent upon perpetual representation on the stage of the world;—the roundness and polish produced by continual friction against each other while borne like pebbles along the current of life;—and the fluency engendered by talking for half a century with those talkers *par excellence*, who, whatever may be their *esprit de conduite*, are without rivals as regards *l'esprit de conversation*.

Among the grey heads and withered faces of this venerable assemblage, the beauty of Madame de Rostanges fascinated the attention of Greville, as if seen for the first time. The fine oval of her face, the transparent purity of her skin, the lustrous beauty of her auburn hair, the symmetry of her striking figure—enhanced

rather than impaired by a certain air of languor and indolence, imparting feminine grace to every movement, seemed doubly conspicuous when thus contrasted with the angular features and sallow hues of age. There was something supernatural in her beauty ; — she seemed a being of another sphere ; — and Greville stood watching the varying reflections of light upon her pearl-like complexion, and in the depths of her expressive eyes, till his enthusiasm became perhaps somewhat too manifest.

“ Of what are you thinking ? ” — said she, motioning him to take a place beside her on the sofa to which she had repaired, in order not to disturb the tranquillity of the card-players. “ Nay, — do not look so dreadfully alarmed ! — If you are meditating some frightful crime, keep your secret. I will torment you with no indiscreet inquiries. But, to say the truth, your countenance is that of *une âme en peine*. ”

“ Rather that of *une âme en béatitude* ! ” replied Greville, in a low voice.

“ As little beatific as possible ! ” replied Sophie,

smiling, “You look overawed by the gravity of your position ; — as much out of place as some young Colonel of the days of Louis XIV., when paying his court in the solemn circle of Sa Soli-dité, Madame de Maintenon.—Do you not feel that you have no business here ?”

“Out of place in any circle of which you form a part ?”—cried Greville. “Till your inquiry disenchanted me, I was beginning to fancy myself one of the coterie, — a segment of the circle !”—

“You want fifty years of the proper age,” cried Madame de Rostanges. “Have a care,—or you will find your hair begin to whiten !”

“If not one of the coterie, then, one of the family ?” persisted Greville.

Madame de Rostanges paused a moment, as if doubtful of his meaning. “*We* you know,” said she, evidently mistaking him, “are connected with this house by twofold ties of family affection. Our week would scarcely seem complete, without an hour on Saturday nights devoted to *cette bonne tante* ! Look at Eugénie !”

she continued, pointing to Mademoiselle de Nangis, who was engaged in conversation with the Papal Nuncio, and two or three high-bred old Frenchmen, who, as the youngest of the party, affected the gallantry of devoting themselves to her entertainment. “Eugénie protests she is never better amused than in this house, where she is worshipped as the type of everything that is good, gracious, and beautiful.”

“*That* surely need afford no distinction in the eyes of Mademoiselle de Nangis,” said Greville, warmly. “I have yet to make acquaintance with the circle in which she is considered less highly.”

The colour rose to the cheeks of Madame de Rostanges. “How strange,” cried she, “that though ever ready to gratify *me* by these praises of my sister, you give *her* so little reason to suppose you alive to her merits!”—

“I fancied myself complying with the customs of the country,” observed Greville, somewhat embarrassed.” Mademoiselle de Nangis is, however, fully aware of my respect, my admiration—”

“ You are mistaken !” interrupted Sophie. “ It is in vain I constantly point out to her,—not your merits, for of these she is fully aware,—but your deep devotion. Eugénie assures me you have other views,—that she has no share in your stay in Paris,—that—”

“ And *you* !”—burst in a concentrated whisper from the lips of Lord Greville.—“ Do you, in honesty and truth, believe that she is more to me,—that she can ever be more to me,—than your sister ? I love Eugénie—because she is yours. I would peril my life to serve her ; but it is for your sake,—for *yours*, who are dearer to me than my own life,—my own salvation. Forgive me, if I offend you. You have brought this explanation upon yourself !”

He paused,—unprepared for the alarming effect produced by his rashness upon Madame de Rostanges. Too much startled for utterance, every vestige of colour had forsaken her cheek. Yet she dared not resent his address. The slightest demonstration would, in that quiet assembly, have attracted attention. Oppressed

as she was, she did not even dare request a window might be opened, so peremptory were the habits of the place.

“ Speak to me,—reassure me,—one word, only one word !”—whispered Greville, terrified by the overpowering nature of her emotions. “ Whence arises this agitation ?—Have I excited your indignation by my frankness,—or may I—*dare* I—hope that——”

“ Hope nothing,—but that I may learn to pity and forgive !”—faltered Madame de Rostanges, finding it urgent to put some limit to his imprudence. “ It is unworthy of you to compel me to listen to avowals which I dare not resent, lest I bring down upon *you* the resentment of the confiding friend you have outraged,—on myself the ridicule of society ! So long as you choose to remain by my side, I am at the mercy of your insults. Be generous, therefore, and leave me to myself, that *I* may be generous and learn to forget your offence.”

There was something too earnest in the low measured tone of Madame de Rostanges to

admit of reply or remonstrance. After a moment, Lord Greville rose from his seat and crossed the room, as if to examine a cast from the beautiful bust of Henri V., executed by Monsieur de Nieuwerkerke, which ornamented one of the consoles. Nothing in the movement likely to attract notice ! The forms of French society do not authorize a man to devote his attention to one woman throughout the evening, after the fashion of English flirtations ; being bound, as member of a coterie, to address his civilities in succession to all the ladies present.

Meanwhile, though conscious that, according to the formalities of the old-fashioned circle into which he had seen fit to intrude, he had no right to retire till the departure of those by whom he had been presented, Lord Greville resolved upon retreat ; and stood watching the entrance of the servants with trays of orgeat and lemonade, in hopes of seizing the occasion to quit the room unnoticed. When lo ! just as he was congratulating himself on having reached the door in safety, he was pounced upon by the

Princesse de Chaulieu, who had cut out at whist.

“ *Pour le coup, je vous tiens, mon cher milor !*” cried she, taking him unceremoniously by the arm, and leading him back to a chair. “ *Comment ! vous alliez vous esquiver sans me faire votre cour ?*—You fancied me deeply engaged at cards ?—and so I was !—but now, I am at your service for the next half-hour ; or rather, I trust you are at mine.—I have a thousand questions to ask you—a thousand reproaches to make you. How come you to be here at all, when all the world is at Chantilly ?—and why do you invite all the world to dine with you at Chantilly, and leave *me* out of the party ?—Ay, ay ! of course you will be proud of the honour. But it is too late ! *Je ne prétends pas servir d’arrière pensée à un beau milor tel que vous !*—Pray tell me, is it true that when the Duke of Orleans’s horse came in loser yesterday, the people shouted for joy ?—Ah ! you think they only intended to cheer the winning horse ! You fancy they always applaud on such occasions !—à d’autres !

I can promise you that the peasantry of Chantilly are legitimists to a man ;—and well they may, considering all they owe to the poor dear unfortunate Duc de Bourbon.—As my cousin St. Sévron was saying,—by the way, I dare say you saw St. Sévron at the races ?—You visited, perhaps, his charming little hunting box in the forest of Chantilly ?—Poor soul !—I am sure he must be sadly *ennuyé* there,—alone, like Robinson Crusoe in his island !—Crusoe would have been bored to death if he had not had so much to do to find himself in food, and take care of himself against the cannibals. But St. Sévron has nothing to do, unluckily,—except look out for a wife ; and there sits my little friend Eugénie, who will have nothing to say to him ! *Je commence à me douter que cette chère Eugénie nous fait des infidélités en faveur de la vieille Angleterre,—ou bien l'Ecosse.*—I always forget whether you are English, Scotch, or Irish ?—nay ! I could sometimes fancy you French, you speak our language so well, and direct it so powerfully to our hearts. *Ah !*

pardon! I did not think it in the *bavardage* of an old woman like myself to bring a blush to your cheek!"—cried the Princess, checking herself on discovering the embarrassment of Lord Greville's manner as he listened to her rambling discourse.

"My dear brother," she continued, turning suddenly to the Duc de Monthémont, one of the venerable flirts of Mademoiselle de Nangis,—
"admire, I beg, before it fades away, what you proposed the other day to send as a curiosity to the *musée des antiques*,—the blush of a *jeune homme comme il faut!*"

"I am prepared to admire anything said, done, or intended by Lord Greville," replied the courteous old gentleman. "But I fear, *ma bonne sœur*, as you have been *affiché*ing him in a tête-à-tête for the last ten minutes, that your indiscretions have to answer for the blush.—My sister will give you a sad opinion of the coquetry of our grandmamas!"—he continued, turning towards the Earl.

"Madame la Princesse has been kindly in-

vesting me with the name and privilege of a Frenchman,"—he replied, after an effort to rally his spirits. "Allow me to prove my gratitude and nationality by gallantly taking her defence."

"*Volontiers !*"—replied the old Duke. "I am proud to accept such a *compatriote*. We are too sadly divided among ourselves not to welcome the reinforcement of foreign auxiliaries."

"Yet with such gratifying tokens of social union around me," rejoined Greville, glancing at the little cheerful chatty assembly, "I cannot fancy you in need of succours."

"The very *esprit de coterie* imparting so great a charm to our society, forms the bane of our well-being as a nation," replied the Duc de Monthémont. "The subdivision of parties in France is fatal to the stability of things. Thus hampered, a government is tied down like Gulliver, by a thousand petty ligatures; and it is easier to combat a single giant, than an army of pigmies."

"Do not listen to the Duke," interposed

Mademoiselle de Nangis, noticing the extreme embarrassment of Greville, and attributing it to the cavalier manner in which he had been seized upon by the Princess and made over to the prolix civilities of her brother. "In the first place, because he is talking politics,—a forbidden theme; in the second, because he is finding fault with his countrymen,—which is rank treachery. Just now, when I was presuming to praise *la jeune France* for its innocence (amid much guilt) of the sin of courtiership,—guess what he replied!"—

"That the public men of the day were as vilely addicted to adulation as the red-heeled courtiers of the *Œil de Bœuf*!" cried the old gentleman, firmly; "but, that instead of offering their homage to the throne, they toady vulgar opinion.—Look at our Chambers,—look at our Journals!—What baseness of adulation to the public!"

"Nay, not a word against the public!" cried Mademoiselle de Nangis, perceiving how much relief she afforded Greville, by taking the

conversation out of his hands. “But for the influence of that mighty tribunal, what great actions would be performed,—what chefs-d’œuvres executed?”—

“Do you count for nothing the inspirations of genius, the hopes of immortal fame?” remonstrated the gay old Frenchman.

“Immortal fame is the award of posterity,—the public succeeding the public of to day, which you affect to despise,”—persisted Eugénie. “For my part, I have unbounded respect for masses. In this room we have a charming little handful of people; and the spangled circle in the *Œil de Bœuf* was no doubt equally *aimable*. But it would be presumptuous to weigh either the one or the other against the three hundred million inhabitants of the terrestrial globe, enlightened by the experience of forty centuries.”

“*Mais, ma chère, tu fais là, je crois, du La Mennaisisme!*” cried the Princesse de Chaulieu, laughing heartily. “Was it in Italy you picked up this horrible jargon?—If you

had taken such opinions with you packed in your imperial, they must have been confiscated crossing the frontier ;—Mademoiselle de Nangis and her revolutionary notions would have been inserted in the Emperor's list of prohibitions !—You, at least, thank Heaven, *mon cher Monsieur de Grévil*, are not accountable for her transcendental liberalism.—*You* do not belong to the *canaille* who say with Montaigne, *puisque nous ne pouvons atteindre la grandeur, vengeons nous à en médire !*—You are one of *us*,—a connecting link between king and people, conceding to the one the respect you exact from the other !”

“ *Intermédiaire entre le roi et le peuple comme le chien de chasse entre le chasseur et les lièvres !* ” cried Mademoiselle de Nangis,—satisfied that no one present would trace the profane origin of the quotation. “ Do not look so shocked !” she continued, addressing Greville in a lower voice ; “ but thank me for my *échauffourée* as a successful attempt to divert the attention of these good people from your strange confusion of countenance. Either you have lost your fortune

in the betting stand at Chantilly, or,—but I will not perplex myself by assigning causes for your bewilderment!—The dear good Duke has lost all recollection of your incoherence, in his horror at *my* apostasy. As to his sister, I doubt whether she will allow Sidonie to remain my friend.”

“You have so many and such attached friends,” cried Greville, “that few people can so well afford to——”

“Hush, hush!” interrupted Mademoiselle de Nangis — “this forced *empressement* is even worse than your abstraction. But the whist party is broken up, and we are at liberty to take our leave. Monsieur le Duc!—are you sufficiently in charity with me to fetch me the scarf that hangs by my sister’s chair?”—she continued. Then, while the polite old gentleman shuffled off in execution of her commission, delighted to be the chosen cavalier of so young and fair a creature, she again, and in a more hurried manner addressed Lord Greville. “You are ill,” said she, “or some painful event has befallen you. Do not deny it!—your coun-

tenance betrays the disturbance of your feelings."

"You are mistaken,—believe me you are mistaken," faltered Lord Greville.

"Only one word!"—persisted Eugénie, as she saw the poor Duke preparing to return with her scarf trailing from his arm. Can I be of the least use,—the least comfort to you?—My friendship—such as it is—is yours. Dispose of me,—you have too much sense to mistake my meaning!"—she continued, as a vivid flush suddenly overspreading the brow of Lord Greville inspired a fear of the possibility of being mistaken. All explanation, however, on the part of the Earl was out of the question. The gallant old Duc de Monthémont was again by their side; and Monsieur and Madame de Rostanges were in the act of taking their leave.

"*A Dimanche donc, n'est ce pas?*"—inquired Eugénie, hurriedly addressing Lord Greville; "*et à Chantilly!*"

"*A Dimanche—à Chantilly!*"—he replied, in a hesitating tone, doubtful whether under all the circumstances, the party might still take place;

still more uncertain whether he dare approach Madame de Rostanges to offer his usual attention of escorting her to the carriage. Lost in irresolution, he loitered beside Mademoiselle de Nangis, inexpressibly pained by the evident indisposition of her sister.

“ I fear she has over-fatigued herself with her ride,” said Monsieur de Rostanges, in reply to the officious inquiries with which the Duc de Monthémont accompanied his good night ; and at that moment, a glance at her sister’s face seemed to enlighten Mademoiselle de Nangis. She understood all,—the origin of Greville’s emotion,—of Sophie’s indisposition.

“ Offer me your arm,” said she to Lord Greville, in a low but peremptory tone, “ or all these people will form the same conclusions as myself.”

Startled by the abruptness of her manner, he obeyed in silence. In silence, they followed Sophie and her husband to the carriage. Lord Greville had not even presence of mind to utter a word in reply to the diffuse parting compliments

of Monsieur de Rostanges. He stood on the doorsteps under the portico of the Hotel de St. Pierre, with his head uncovered in acknowledgment of Eugénie's parting salutation, till the carriage drove out of the court-yard.

CHAPTER IV.

On gouverne les hommes avec la tête ;—on ne joue pas aux échecs avec un bon cœur.

CHAMPFORT.

It was some relief to the overcharged feelings of Greville that, on his return to his own apartments, there was no Fred Massingberd, — no noisy, sneering “best fellow in the world,” to irritate him with idle questions. He was not in the humour to be amused with slang, or patient with persiflage. Never had he been so eager for the relief of finding himself alone. Yet

the invectives which he lavished upon himself during the first quarter of an hour of this much coveted *tête à tête* seemed to render the enjoyment problematical. After cursing his own rashness, his own precipitancy, however, he found some apology for his brief madness in the recollection that he had been hurried into his ill-timed avowal by the joy of finding himself in the presence of Sophie,—Sophie, kind, beautiful, and encouraging,—after two tedious days of absence. Then, after calling to mind, moment by moment, and incident by incident, the unlucky scene by which his relations with the family of Rostanges seemed likely to be brought to a close,—after living over again in imagination those happy moments when he stood contemplating the object of his intense admiration, till carried away by the charm of her attractions,—he felt that all had been inevitable,—all predestined;—that were the scene to be renewed, even with his present experience of its

evil issue, he must again yield to the same overmastering impressions.

For some time, all he could think of was Sophie,—the gentle, confiding, Sophie,—alienated from him for ever by his deep offence,—Sophie resentful,—Sophie unhappy !—By what right had he introduced one painful emotion into her peaceful soul — one hint of shame into her blameless existence! He recalled to mind the look of distress contracting her features as she listened to his mad avowal; the deep paleness by which her features were overspread when, during her husband's parting colloquy with the Duc de Monthémont, he caught a glimpse of her face. But not one gleam of encouragement could he gather from the recollection ! Not one indication of weakness on the part of Madame de Rostanges! Not a look, not a gesture to afford hope of future relenting! He had broken for ever the ties uniting him with the family, — he had pro-

nounced his own sentence of dismissal from their regard !—

It is not wonderful that such anticipations, aggravated by the wild and vague suggestions of an over-excited mind, should drive a man so inexperienced in the ways of love and folly, almost to despair.

For some time, he paced the room like a madman, as if to exhaust the irritability of his feelings. But by degrees, his frenzy raved itself to rest ; and flinging himself into a chair, he sank into a reverie of deep despondency.

To his train of bitter and bewildering reflections, at length succeeded a more reasonable frame of mind. The secondary events of that memorable evening recurred successively to his recollection. He could even scarcely forbear a smile at the singular coterie whose monotonous circle he had selected to be the scene of his imprudence ; a circle a thousand times characterized in his hearing by Roche Aymar and

other of his fashionable French associates, as "*fossil*,"—antediluvian,—the most decorous of all the strongholds of Parisian decorum !

At the close of these reminiscences, grave and gay, came wandering by a figure like an angel, bearing the image of the sister of Madame de Rostanges. At any other moment than the one in which they reached his ear, the insinuations of the Princesse de Chaulieu, nay of Sophie herself, that a preference was entertained for him by Mademoiselle de Nangis, would have touched him deeply. The dissipations into which Greville had been introduced by the companionship of St. George and Fred Masingberd, if they had in some degree corrupted his mind, had not yet hardened his heart ; nor had his affections been prematurely frittered away by the flirtations of a London season. Inexperienced in the withering lessons of fashionable life, he saw no triumph in being the object of an attachment, a source of misery to the gene-

rous heart that loved him ; and as no *roué* companion was at hand to point out the amusement to be extracted for himself out of the delusions and sufferings of Eugénie, all he desired was that the Princesse de Chaulieu might be deceived in her conjectures.

It might be that his mind was still under the influence of gratified vanity, but never before had he rendered such complete justice to the attractions of Mademoiselle de Nangis. During her conversation with the two old people from whose importunities she had released him, there was something as piquant as impressive in the expression of her countenance. She had been as eager to defend him as her sister had been prompt to condemn ; and how could he be otherwise than grateful for such unmerited generosity ? The superiority of Eugénie over her sister in elevation of character, he had never doubted ; he was beginning to fancy she might equally excel Madame de Rostanges in warmth of heart.

Had Fred Massingberd been present to claim his share, as in their days of earlier intimacy, in the meditations of Lord Greville, the dandy would probably have found cause for merriment in this twofold preference; nay, perhaps have accused his friend of transcending him in libertinism, by so singular a combination of attachment as between the two sisters. At present, however, Greville was not prepared to admit that Eugénie was more to him than an object of admiration. There was something in the loftiness of her character that almost overawed him. He felt humbled before her as by the presence of a superior being: while in her feebler sister, he saw only a gentle, fragile being, relying upon others,—he dared not say upon himself,—for tenderness and support.

The morning light found him still meditating upon these dilemmas,—lost in surmises of what would be the course pursued on the morrow by Madame de Rostanges. Would she,

like a woman of the world, affect to treat the matter as a jest,—a blunder,—to be overlooked unless repeated; or resent his conduct with all the bitterness of wounded feeling? The question remained undecided in his mind when, long after the dawn of day, he retired to rest.

He was still asleep,—still dreaming,—dreaming that he was wandering in some desolate island, like Prospero's or Haïdee's, with *two* fair spirits for his ministers,—bearing, as nearly as the ethereal images of dreams ever resemble the material beings, their prototypes, the forms of Sophie and Eugénie,—when he was roused by Giacchimo's announcement of a visitor. “Monsieur de Rostanges was waiting for my lord in the adjoining room!” A visit at that unusual hour seemed to forebode urgent and important business; and he was preparing to rise in haste, with the conviction that some dreadful explanation was about to take place

between himself and his injured friend, when his door was slightly pushed open.

“ May I come in ?”—asked the tremulous voice of the Marquis, in anything but a tone of resentment. “ You are not so great a coquet I trust, as young Albert de la Roche Aymar ; who, when staying at Les Etangs, will never allow me to enter his room while he remains in the ‘ *simple appareil d’une beauté arrachée au sommeil.* ’ ”

“ I should have been with you in a moment ; but if you will excuse the disorder of my room, am equally pleased to receive you here. Giacchino, a chair for Monsieur le Marquis ! ” cried Greville, inexpressibly relieved by this jocose *entrée en scène*. “ But what brings you out so early ? ”—

“ *Un caprice de femme !* ” replied the Marquis, leisurely seating himself ; “ I am sent across the Carrousel in the glare of a June morning, merely to tell you that my womenkind will not hear of going to-morrow to Chantilly.”

“ On what account ?” demanded Greville, in some trepidation.

“ I have already told you—*un caprice* ! They have discovered that the weather is too fine ; that to travel twenty miles in the heat of the day to see three or four horses flogged along a green field, is not worth the sacrifice of their complexions. They talk of sun and dust ;—they talk, in short, like children ;—for all this they might have foreseen ten days ago, when the party was first proposed.”

“ They reckoned perhaps upon rain when they accepted my invitation,” observed Greville, in a tone of pique.

“ Don’t imagine, however, that I shall submit to their disappointing us !” cried the Marquis, warmly. “ I have set my heart upon the races !—I have not been at Chantilly these five years,—in fact, not since my marriage ; and Sophie has never been there in her life.—Go, therefore, I am determined she shall !”

“Not contrary to her inclination, I trust!” interrupted Lord Greville.

“Exercise your own eloquence, then!” cried the Marquis, eagerly. “Up and dress, *mon cher*!—Accompany me home. A word or two in the ear of Eugénie, over whom you have unlimited power, and all will be arranged!—I will wait for you. My cabriolet is at the door.—You can breakfast at our house.”

Lord Greville could do no otherwise than assent; but he hoped to find, during the completion of his toilet, some pretext for not accompanying Monsieur de Rostanges. He felt disagreeably as well as disgracefully situated, with regard to the man who distinguished him with such brotherly friendship. Throughout their intimacy, the Marquis had treated him with more confidence than he desired; as if equalizing the difference of age between them by recounting scandals of himself and others, such as would have elicited envy and

admiration from any young Frenchman of Greville's age; his favourite theme being the blindness of husbands, and the triumphs of enterprising lovers. To entertain the most remote suspicion that such a ridicule could attach to himself, was an outrage to his young wife of which Rostanges never dreamed. He had perfect confidence in Sophie. He trusted to her religious principles,—he trusted to her self-respect,—

He trusted to the blood of Loredano,
Pure in her veins !

and consequently indulged in pleasantries which came with a very bad grace from his lips to the ears of Lord Greville.

“Do I incommode you?” said he, while the Earl proceeded in his toilet, wishing him at the other extremity of the earth. “If not, I have a thousand questions about Chantilly which I was prevented asking last night by my interminable rubber. Tell me, *mon cher*, what could

tempt our friend St. Pierre, — man of the world as he is,—to let young Achille de Cerny accompany his wife down to the races? St. Pierre's blindness really abuses the permission which husbands have to remain blind. Have a care, or you will certainly cut yourself if you flourish your razor in that careless manner! By the way, next to the folly of the Duc de St. Pierre, the thing I least understand in the world is, the habit you Englishmen have of being your own barbers. I could as easily make my own boots, as *faire ma barbe*!"

It was in vain that Greville attempted to direct the conversation into a more suitable channel. Scarcely a word uttered by the Marquis, from the moment of entering the apartment of Lord Greville, to that when he ushered him into the saloon of the Hotel de Rostanges, but served to aggravate the annoyance and confusion of his young friend.

"I have brought you Greville, *bon gré mal*

gré, to add his representations to mine upon your *inconséquence* in declining your visit to Chantilly !” said the Marquis, pushing Greville towards the table where Eugénie sat writing.—“Greville is indignant. He assures me he has made the most princely preparations ; and will not hear of his *terrines de Nérac* and *aspics d’écrevisses* being thrown away. Speak to her, my dear Greville !”—he continued, while his companion stood silent and with downcast eyes beside the table, deeply shocked by the change wrought by the lapse of a single night in the countenance of Eugénie.

“Since *your* eloquence has been unsuccessful, I have little hope of persuading Mademoiselle de Nangis,” said he, at length, in a faltering voice.

“On this occasion I own she is yet more obstinate than my wife !” cried the Marquis. “At one moment, I had all but persuaded Madame de Rostanges to alter her determination ;—when—”

“ Lord Greville is aware that it is impossible for us to enjoy his hospitality,” interrupted Eugénie, in a grave and steady voice, which did not place the delinquent more at ease. “ He will not renew an invitation which he knows to be unacceptable.”

“ What the deuce is all this ?”—cried the Marquis, to whom the alteration of Eugénie’s manner was unaccountable. “ Explain to me, Greville,—for you are of an age to understand better than I can pretend to do, a change of the barometer of a female temper from fair to foul, without any perceptible variation of the atmosphere. Nay,—Eugénie,—my child,—why these gestures of impatience ?—If Greville outraged your punctilious sense of delicacy by rendering his attentions last night more ostensible than belongs to the strict code of French etiquette,—forgive him !—He does not understand our customs. He will offend less boldly another time. No answer ?— You are both

silent,—both embarrassed !—In God’s name, end this foolish child’s play, and be friends !”

A single look, — a momentary glance, — launched at that moment by Mademoiselle de Nangis towards Lord Greville, brought as rapid a flush to the cheek of the old man, as the one detected the preceding night between Greville and her sister, had brought to her own. There was a peculiar inflection of contempt in the look, according ill with the relative position which he had chosen to assign them.

“ You received him almost as a stranger !” — cried Rostanges, directing alternately his earnest gaze upon Lord Greville and his sister-in-law. “ Sophie refuses to see him !—What am I to understand by all this ? — Greville !— have you not a word to plead in your own favour, — not a syllable to offer me in explanation ? — *What* is your offence ? — I am beginning to feel that I was perhaps to blame in bringing you hither ;—perhaps—perhaps inexcusable !”

“ You are inexcusable *now* !” cried Eugénie, starting up from her occupation as she noticed the growing agitation of Rostanges ;—“ thoroughly inexcusable,—in pretending to play the mediator in a woman’s quarrel, which you only aggravate by your interference. Leave your friend Lord Greville to me,” she continued,—“ for I protest to you, dear Adolphe, that if you pretend to plead another word in his favour, I will not extend my gracious pardon to him for the next six months !”

“ I am satisfied—I see perfectly how it is !” cried the Marquis, with the air of a man relieved from painful apprehensions. “ A lover’s quarrel,—*après le beau temps, la pluie* ! I confess, for a moment, I—but it were unpardonable to give utterance to such extravagant chimeras. Eugénie, child !—I insist upon it that you instantly give your hand to Lord Greville,—my preserver, as far as regards his humane intentions. *Sans rancune* !—Offer him your hand, and let all be forgotten !”

Mademoiselle de Nangis instantly complied. She neither blushed nor averted her eyes as she placed her hand in that of Greville. But there was something in her calm self-possession more dispiriting to him than anger or embarrassment.

“And now that peace is concluded,” cried the Marquis, rubbing his hands with the utmost elation, “go to your sister, dearest Eugénie, and tell her that *her* ratification is indispensable.”

To the great surprise of Greville, Mademoiselle de Nangis proceeded deliberately to the door for the fulfilment of her brother-in-law’s commission.

“I knew how it would be,” exclaimed Rosanges, the moment the door closed upon her. “It was too bad of them to despatch me across the Carrousel on so bootless an errand, when they had never for a moment altered their intention of going to the races.”

Lord Greville made no reply. Though affecting to fix his eyes with unconcern upon

the gloomy, garden level with the windows of the saloon, on the damp turf of which the withered flowers of a sickly acacia tree were fluttering down from the overshadowing boughs, his mind was engrossed by anxiety. He dreaded the arrival of Madame de Rostanges. If the emotions of the preceding night had produced so remarkable an effect upon Eugénie, what change might they not have wrought in her more delicately organized sister ! If Sophie should prove unable to control her agitation as Eugénie had done ! If by some outbreak of feeling she should betray herself and him ! Nay, if *he* himself, on seeing her pale, dejected, suffering, should find it impossible to control the emotions which he felt stirring in every vein—throbbing in every pulse !

The door of the saloon opened. Greville dared not turn from the window, till an exclamation from the Marquis apprized him that Eugénie had re-entered alone.

“ My sister begs me to assure Lord Greville,”

said she, replying to the inquiring looks of her brother-in-law, "that she shall have the pleasure of accompanying us to-morrow to the races."

"Bravo!" cried the Marquis;—"bravo, bravo!—I am beginning to think myself as able a diplomatist as Thiers—as clever a negotiator as Guizot!—*ça va—ça marche!*—To-morrow, my dear Greville, to-morrow we will make a day of it to be marked with white chalk in the calendar."

At that moment, Mademoiselle de Nangis advanced towards Greville, offering her hand, as if understanding that he was taking leave—"Farewell!" said she.—"*A demain!*"—

Accepting, and not unwillingly, this token of dismissal, Lord Greville gratefully returned the pressure of her hand. On quitting the room, he found that his own contained a narrow strip of paper, containing a few almost illegible words:—"Find a pretext to put off the party. I have a right to claim this at your hands."

Whether this peremptory missive were in the

handwriting of Madame de Rostanges or her sister, he was unable to determine. To obey the behest would be a relief to *him*, as it was a duty towards those whose re-acceptance of his invitation purported only to tranquillize the suspicions of the Marquis. The difficulty lay in devising an excuse sufficiently plausible to prevent their renewal.

Though Greville had desired that his horses might be sent after him to the Faubourg, his interview with Eugénie had been so brief that it did not much surprise him, on reaching the court-yard, to find neither horses nor servants in attendance. The cabriolet of the Marquis stood in the remise awaiting his orders: but he preferred making his exit on foot.

Just, however, as he reached the offices of the Etat Major, in the Rue St. Dominique, he perceived his own cabriolet driven towards him at a furious rate; and while preparing to express his displeasure to the groom, saw that Giacchimo occupied his place in the vehicle

It was difficult to guess what brought the courier so much out of his orbit, or for what purpose ; and at the pace at which the cabriolet was proceeding, it was even difficult to arrest their attention for the inquiry. He did, however, succeed in hailing them. In a moment the horse was checked, and Giacchimo, leaping out, presented a letter to his hand.

“ Something of importance, eccellenza ! The words *très pressé* determined me to proceed immediately to your lordship. It is only ten minutes since Monsieur de Rothschild’s courier brought the letter to the hotel.” But every syllable of the explanation was lost.—Having hurriedly broken the seal, Greville was now absorbed in the perusal of his mother’s memorable epistle !

“ Post horses to my dormeuse in half an hour, at the Hotel des Princes ! ” said he, addressing the astonished courier, when he reached the concluding words of the letter. “ You paid up everything, I fancy, before we went to Chan-

tilly?—Settle whatever remains. The passport was *visé* for England last week, and will still serve! — Go! — let all be in readiness for my departure by one o'clock."

Then, hastily assuming the courier's place in the cabriolet, he retraced his way to the Hotel de Rostanges without further explanation, leaving the amazed Giacchimo sacréing in the middle of the pavé; heartily wishing he had been less assiduous in conveying the *très pressée* English letter to his *très pressé* English Lord.

But though thus prompt and decided in issuing his orders, poor Greville, already sufficiently disturbed in mind by the events of the morning, was now almost frantic with agitation and perplexity. The incoherent tone of Lady Greville's letter convinced him that her indisposition was even more serious than she had chosen to avow. He might perhaps arrive too late to behold alive that best and fondest of mothers! Every hour, every minute was precious. By exciting the zeal of his servants,—by distributing

money on every side,—he might, however, perhaps sufficiently hasten the usually sluggish movements of the French postilions ; and after having made his explanations and adieux to the family of Rostanges, not a moment further should be lost. So absorbed was he, in short, in the idea of his mother's danger, that every feeling of embarrassment connected with Sophie or her sister was forgotten ; and he re-entered the Hotel de Rostanges almost breathless with emotion,—but with emotion wholly unconnected with even the dearest of its inmates.

Wholly preoccupied, he pressed forward unannounced into the saloon. The Marquis was still there, occupying at the writing-table the place which Eugénie had quitted. But a rapid glance round the room shewed him Mademoiselle de Nangis engaged in earnest conversation with her sister, under the awning of one of the windows opening to the garden.

“ I am come to take a hurried leave of you, previous to my departure for England,” said he,

unceremoniously addressing them. "I have this moment received news of the dangerous illness of my mother."

The Marquis de Rostanges uttered an exclamation of surprise and horror. The two ladies remained silent.

"I would fain express my regret that this precipitate departure must prevent my fulfilling my engagements to-morrow with the friends to whose goodness I am indebted for every happy moment I have enjoyed in France," faltered Greville, overpowered by emotion. "But I feel that I have lost all power of expression. —The sudden shock has thoroughly unmanned me!—When she quitted Paris, my mother was completely restored to health; —and now, —suffering, —in danger, —perhaps no more!—Yes,—perhaps before I reach home, she may be gone for ever!"

The countenance of Greville bore such ample token to the deep-felt sincerity of his expressions of grief, that the kind-hearted old Marquis, has-

tening towards him, wrung his hand with the tenderest sympathy. But Eugénie and her sister, regarding all that was passing as a scene got up in compliance with the terms of their letter, could scarcely repress the contempt with which they regarded the unparalleled dissembler. The attention of Rostanges was luckily too much engrossed by offers of service to Greville connected with his hurried journey, to notice the singular indifference with which his wife and sister contemplated the sufferings of their friend.

“In six-and-thirty hours I shall reach London,” — was Greville’s reply to the circumstantial inquiries of Rostanges. “Only four days will have elapsed between the writing of that letter, and my arrival at home. But in so critical a state as my mother’s, four days are an age! It is impossible to conjecture what changes may have taken place.”

“But you will write to us?” persisted the Marquis. “You will surely write and apprise us of your safe arrival, and of the state in which

you find Lady Greville?—Remember, I beseech you, that we take in all that concerns you, more than even the interest of friendship! You are one of us, my dear Gréville. We love you as our brother,—as our child!”—And the tears gathering in his eyes, attested the warm sincerity of the kind old man.

“I will write!” was all Greville could reply. Absorbed in his filial afflictions, it did not suggest itself to his mind that his sorrow could appear to Madame de Rostanges and her sister the result of studied duplicity; and he felt that even his offences of the preceding night scarcely excused the contemptuous indifference with which they stood contemplating his distress.

Their demeanour, however, so far hardened his heart as to give him courage for the word farewell. The Marquis, deeply moved, accompanied him through the suite of rooms into the hall, with one arm encircling his waist, as he would have embraced a son or brother. But, as Greville reached the door of the saloon, turning

hastily round for a last glance at those who had exercised so singular an influence over his destinies, he beheld on the countenance of one sister a smile of derision, on that of the other a look of sorrowful indignation.—To the one he was an object of hatred,—to the other, of contempt!—

CHAPTER V.

Je le mène un peu roide ; mais ces petits bonshommes ne sont-ils pas trop heureux qu'on leur inspire des manières de cour, et le bon gout pour les habits, les meubles, les équipages ; enfin, qu'on leur apprenne à se ruiner ?

REGNARD.

“STARK staring mad, by Jupiter !” cried Fred Massingberd to Lord St. George, when, after the arrival of hamper after hamper, and *bourriche* after *bourriche*, at the Hotel de Bourbon Condé on that eventful Saturday, in preparation for the morrow's fête, the last coach brought a packet from Greville, containing intelligence that he had already started for England !—

“I bet you a pound poor Grev has received

a hint from that prosy old Rostanges, to make a clear coast of it!"—observed St. George, flinging aside his cigar.

"I bet you *ten* he has gone to ask his mother's consent to marry that dark-eyed jade of a sister!" cried Fred; and, true to the code of English dandyism, they lost, in the interest of a bet, all consideration for the welfare of a friend. "Those Rostanges people have been playing a monstrous knowing game with Grev!" resumed Massingberd. "While trying to catch the married sister, he has been caught by the single. With you or I, or any fellow versed in the ways of the world, it would, of course, have been no go; or one might have even made the wife, and consequently the husband, pay the penalty of their cunning. But Grev has swallowed both bait and hook;—and though he writes this cursed stuff about his mother's being at death's door, and all that sort of thing, take my word for it, 'tis only because he's ashamed of telling us the truth."

“I’m glad he has not been ashamed to send us reinforcements for the cellar!” cried St. George, stretching himself, and yawning. “To do Grev justice, he does things *en prince* where money is concerned; which, considering how damned badly he was brought up, is much to his credit. Apropos to credit,—I see he has also sent you *carte blanche* with Rothschild to book up for him here—”

“Ay!—and a pretty drawback with it! We are to do the honours to-morrow to all that stiff-necked crew of St. Sévron, Clermonts, and Co.”

“What a bore!” cried St. George; perfectly satisfied to accept the hospitality of Lord Greville, but not his commissions. “We might have had capital fun with Cerny, Roche Aymar, and others who shall be nameless, if there had been no women of the party. However, we may perhaps be able to make the Duchess understand, to-morrow at the races, that she is not wanted. When these people see that Grev is

really off, they will have tact enough to be off too."

In this agreeable supposition, he was justified by the fact. The Comte de St. Sévron was too well acquainted with the habits of the gentleman *qui jurait bien et qui payait mal* to introduce his friends the Clermonts into such company, unchecked by the presence of Lord Greville. A ready excuse was found for their absence; and the entertainment projected in honour of three of the most elegant women in Paris became, in the sequel, a noisy and disreputable orgie.

Meanwhile, Lord Greville proceeded on his journey,—a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions. The generous trustfulness of his nature rendered it impossible for him to surmise a deception on the part of his mother; and in order to secure his credulity on future occasions, the Countess took care to pursue her system of imposition. From the period of despatching her letter to Paris, she had kept her room;—no great sacrifice,—for in her agitated state of mind

she was scarcely in a mood to be intruded upon by visitors;—till confinement from air and exercise, combined with sleeplessness and irritation, at length imparted to her appearance the air of indisposition needful to attest her imposture. Nay, before Lord Greville arrived, she was *really* ill,—really in want of the services of Mr. Anodyne,—had she felt confidence enough in his skill to accept them.

“How is my mother?” burst from the lips of Lord Greville, addressing the porter’s wife, who came curtseying to the lodge-gates of the Abbey to admit his carriage; and whose smiles of welcome to her young lord ought to have rendered the question superfluous.

“My lady is very poorly,” replied the woman, still smiling and curtseying,—unaware of the nature of Lord Greville’s journey, and believing herself to afford the first news of the Countess’s slight indisposition.

“Go on!—for God’s sake—go on!” cried he, impatiently, to the postboys. And never before

had the Earl been aware of the immensity of his park, and the tedious distance intervening between the lodge and the Abbey.

The moment he alighted, however, the countenance of his old family butler re-assured him. Before a word was spoken between them, Greville saw that his fears had exaggerated the danger, or that his mother had been unnecessarily alarmed on her own account.

“ Mr. Anodyne assures us, my Lord, that her ladyship’s disorder is merely nervous,” replied the old man, hobbling up stairs after the Earl, towards the Countess’s dressing-room. “ Mr. Anodyne has seen her ladyship to-day, and considers her very much better.”

Thus prepared for a state of convalescence, it did not surprise poor Greville, when he entered his mother’s chamber, to find the invalid quietly seated in her arm-chair, certainly in no danger of immediate dissolution. She was pale, indeed,—paler and graver than usual;—for though her heart throbbed within her at sight of her son,

Lady Greville was one of those whom habitual dissimulation enabled to conceal every trace of emotion. Even when pressed in the arms of that only child,—even when she found his warm tears upon her cheek,—she preserved her gentle composure ; probably because she felt at that moment, only curiosity to ascertain whether her interference had been in time to preserve him from the twofold perils of love and matrimony.

“ If you did but know how you have alarmed me !” cried he, when, seated beside her, with her hand clasped in his, and his eyes riveted upon her countenance, he discerned that, though pale and suffering, her illness could not be of a *very* serious nature. “ You grow nervous, dearest mother, by living too much alone.”

The Countess’s cheek became slightly suffused. In this careless remark, she fancied she saw an indication of proposing an addition to her family circle.

“ You were never ill during your stay

abroad," resumed Greville; "because *there* you had cheerful society around you."

Mechanically, his mother withdrew her hand. "Believe me," he continued, "you would enjoy better health did you enter more into the world, or at least surround yourself with the company of younger and stronger persons."

"I have scarcely been a fortnight settled at the Abbey," replied Lady Greville, coldly.—"During that time, I have been engrossed with the business of the estate; but it has not prevented me,—that is—it did not prevent me, till my recent illness," she added, checking herself, "from receiving my friends and neighbours."

"But one's country neighbours are such infernal bores!"—exclaimed Lord Greville, bringing a new tinge to his mother's cheek by this involuntary assumption of the phraseology of Fred Massingberd.

"They are the persons with whom we are more or less required to associate," she replied,

still seeing a peculiar motive for every word uttered by the Earl.

“Less, rather than more, I trust!” cried her son.—“I have not the least taste for the company of the Oxfordshire Squires,—mere haystacks,—mere growers of prize turnips and fatteners of prize sheep.—With all due deference for their vocation, I am very glad to eat their sheep when fatted, but not in their company.”

“Sir Thomas Hardy can scarcely be called a haystack, or Lord Brooks a mere grower of turnips. In manners and accomplishments, they vie at least with any member of your vaunted French society with whom *I* am acquainted,” cried Lady Greville, scarcely able to repress her indignation.

“Certainly — certainly! — it was not to old Brooks or old Hardy I was alluding,” cried her son, unable to understand the motive of this unusual outburst.

“Lady Brooks, too, is as agreeable as she is handsome,” pursued the Countess; “and the

Hardys have grown up into very pleasing girls."

"Have they?—I am glad of it," replied the Earl.—"In that case they will be a great addition to so wretched a neighbourhood as ours. And the family at Hill Hall?—How are the Massingberds?"—

"Much as usual, I believe."

"And pray what has become of that stupid Lady Cobham, and her brute of a husband?" he continued, bringing a feeling of shame to the heart of Lady Greville, when she reflected upon her former misapprehensions.

"Surely you need not make any inquiry of *me* concerning Lady Cobham!" said she. "Have you not been living in the closest intimacy at Paris with her brother?"

"You little know Fred Massingberd, mother, if you fancy him aware of the existence of the Cobhams, unless when they are actually in his presence."

"But you *have* been living in unabated inti-

macy with him?" persisted Lady Greville, to whom the Cobham part of the question was perfectly immaterial. "This Oxford chum of yours, whom you once forbad me to call Mister, I may still be permitted to call your friend?"—

"You shall call him what you like, that is not too ungracious towards a man who is no one's enemy but his own, and at times a mighty pleasant fellow," replied her son, carelessly.

"At all events," persisted the Countess, "he has still your confidence?—You have frequented the same society?—You have enjoyed the same amusements?"

"Not altogether," replied Greville, unsuspecting that his mother had an ulterior motive for her persevering cross-examination. "My habits, you know, are more domestic than Fred's. *I*, for instance, have found enjoyment in quiet family parties, which to *him* would have been about as agreeable as a Quaker's meeting. It is to you I am indebted for a taste for such

pleasures," he continued, leaning affectionately towards her. And though Lady Greville wished, perhaps, at that moment, she had dispensed with the lessons from which he derived a penchant for chimney-corner happiness shared with a French wife, either belonging to himself or the Marquis de Rostanges, she looked forward through the mists of her perplexities to a time when the domestic pleasures of Greville Abbey, shared with a young Countess, née Hardy, or née anything but Nangis, might still be retraced to her precepts.

"You will find this place in great beauty, my dear Hugo!" said she, anxious to change the conversation. "Dowdeswell has executed admirably all we left him to do. The new road from the north lodge is cut through Misterton Hanger, and has given us a beautiful peep towards Ditchley. The lake, too, has been cleared and deepened; and you will be delighted to hear that several fine land-springs were discovered in the operation, which will double the

supply of water. After Paris, what a relief to you to enjoy the quiet and beauty of your own woods and fields!"—

Lord Greville assumed an acquiescent countenance. But, unversed in dissimulation, he gave little hope of turning out so accomplished an actor as might have been expected of his mother's son.

"As soon as I recover my health and spirits," she resumed, "we must make it a point to receive our friends. The Abbey has been too long closed, — people are beginning to complain.—The county wants to know more of you, my dear boy. You have redeemed the pledge given at the tenants' dinner, (of which you reminded me at Naples,) to be here before the summer was over; *I* must redeem mine to society, — by presenting to it, as I feel proud of being able to do, a representative worthy the dignities of the ancient house of Greville."

Rather to conceal his surprise at this set

speech, than from gratification at her compliment, Greville took the hand of his mother, and pressed it to her lips.

“ You have become an adept in French fashions since you left me !” said she, coldly withdrawing her hand. “ I shall find you, I conclude, a perfect lady’s man !”

“ I should be glad that you found me a perfect anything !” cried her son, gaily. “ But I don’t imagine my manners can have derived much polish from the society of my friends St. George or Fred Massingberd.”

The Countess was on the point of broaching the subject nearest her heart, when Greville, tranquillized concerning her health, began to grow conscious of want of food and rest, after his unintermitting journey ; and for the present, she was obliged to forego her inquiries.

Nor, when they met again, did she find it easy to satisfy her curiosity, without hazarding a more direct appeal than was consonant with her mode of policy.

Lady Greville loved to acquire information by indirect means, and to circumvent rather than oppose. Had she indeed elicited by direct interrogation from her son that he was attached to a married woman, or contracted to a single one, she must have met the avowal with such displeasure and so positive a prohibition, as would inevitably produce a breach between them. Having snatched him from present danger therefore, she resolved to trust to her own ingenuity for further insight into his secrets.

The only son of a widowed mother, and the widowed mother of an only son, however brilliant their worldly position, are not much to be envied. The selfishness of human nature too often renders such a tie, a bitter bondage; and never had Greville been so conscious of his own dependence as now, when, having flown to his mother on the first indication of her illness, sacrificing every personal inclination for the prompt performance of the duty, he found her

still dissatisfied. Vexed to see him so miserably out of spirits,—to find him ride off, morning after morning, on pretence of visiting the improvements, or wander out into the woods on pretext of rabbit shooting, though she ascertained that he invariably returned without discharging his gun,—Lady Greville could not refrain from twitting him with his taste for solitary reveries, and his altered state of mind and feeling. Instead of allowing him to pursue, unnoticed, habits which at *his* age could not fail to bring their own remedy, she was perpetually prying into his thoughts, and questioning his occupations.—Her usual tact seemed to have forsaken her. The great trial was come. His heart had evidently escaped her; and she could not at once reconcile herself to the loss.

Nothing would have been more natural than to assign a motive for the absence and pre-occupation of the young Earl, in the listlessness arising from a sudden transition from the stir and movement of Paris, to the stillness and

seclusion of Greville Abbey. But the irritated mother would not accept so poor a subterfuge. She could forgive herself neither the blindness of her infatuation concerning Lady Cobham, nor the infatuation of her blindness concerning the family of Rostanges. She had been a dupe,—her own dupe,—the dupe of her own self-reliance ; and for once, the irritation of the woman got the better of the prudence of the guardian.

Meanwhile, her system of espionage and cross-questioning was becoming insupportable to the Earl. Never were they ten minutes alone in each other's company, that he did not find her eyes watching his countenance in some opposite glass, while adverting to topics connected with his travels, such as she hoped would beguile him into self-betrayal. From whatever point their conversation started, it was sure to end in the Faubourg St. Germain ; and Greville,—poor Greville,—who was labouring to drive from his remembrance all the illusive hopes connected

with the Rue St. Dominique, and to whom even a remote allusion to the family gave inexpressible pain, ended with shunning every occasion for a tête-à-tête.

His affection for his mother was diminished by perceiving how little she was touched by its generous warmth. Deeply as he had suffered during his hurried journey, he could not understand the insensibility with which she adverted to his promptitude in obeying the summons,—a promptitude which, aware that no danger had really existed, she regarded as the triumph of her own manœuvres, not as an evidence of his deep and heartfelt love. And thus, estrangement was springing up between them ; and as nothing but filial tenderness had hitherto blinded him to the monotonous dulness of Greville Abbey, he became every day more sunk in depression, and more careless in disguising his discontent. Lady Greville began to apprehend that his Parisian attachment was deeper rooted than she had at first imagined ; and that

he was planning some desperate resolution. But the more anxious she grew, the bitterer the annoyances she contrived to inflict upon her son !

Having discovered his aversion to a tête-à-tête,—an aversion created by her own mistaken policy,—she tried to diversify the scene by little dinner-parties, consisting of Anodyne and his wife,—Dr. and Mrs. Graves from the vicarage,—and other persons of a secondary order, equally come-at-able ;—people of narrow minds and still narrower experience of the world,—having little or nothing to say, and saying that little or nothing in a manner that rendered it *worse* than nothing. Too courteous and too kindly to make his distaste for such society apparent to the parties themselves, it was to his mother on their departure that he ventured to submit his murmurs.

“None of the county people are yet returned from town,” she replied. “Lord Brooks is only here now and then, when he

can be spared from his duties in parliament. The Hardys will not arrive till the end of the month;—then, we shall be able to do better. Next month, I promise you a succession of brilliant entertainments at the Abbey.”

It was not, however, a succession of brilliant entertainments that Greville wanted,—it was tranquillity; it was to be left the master of his own time,—his own thoughts,—his own countenance;—the Abbey and independence would have sufficed. Despairing of obtaining this, he was beginning to watch the weather and to talk of his yacht, at the risk of bringing on a relapse of the nervous fever; when lo, a signal of release arrived from a quarter wholly unexpected.

“I have a piece of good news for you, my dear Mrs. Massingberd,” cried the squire of Hill Hall one day to his spouse, about a fortnight after the arrival of Lord Greville. “I met Dowdeswell this morning at the justice meeting, who informs me that you are to have

grand doings this summer at the Abbey ; public days every Monday, besides company constantly staying in the house. The lady of your own condition in life is beginning to discover, I suppose, that the linnet is growing too cunning to remain shut up in the cage alone with the boa constrictor. The flutterer won't stand still to have its wings clipped again, after being once allowed his liberty."

"Is that the newest intelligence Mr. Dowdeswell was able to afford you?" demanded Mrs. Massingberd, with a smile of superior information.

"Isn't it enough?—Why now, you know you will send off to town by to-morrow's post for a new bib and tucker to figure in next Monday at Greville Abbey!"

"*I* shall certainly never condescend to figure on public days at Greville Abbey, till I have been invited there to a private dinner-party," retorted the snappish old lady. "I don't pretend to determine, Mr. Massingberd, your sense of what is due to *you*—"

“I am sorry to say there is nothing due to me, except a year’s rent from the Marsh farm and three quarters from old Hollings!” interrupted the squire, provokingly.

“You know very well that I allude to Greville Abbey.”

“As regards Greville Abbey, then, which owes me nothing that I know of, except a grudge, which I have earned perhaps by my plain dealing, I would twenty to one sooner dine there on a public day than in a family party, just as I would sooner have a grain of arsenic mixed in my tank than in my wine-glass.”

“Lady Greville is much obliged to you. It is perhaps because aware of your antipathy, that she spares you as much as possible all contact with her poisonous qualities, leaving you to derive information from her bailiff.”

“Say agent—as a civiler word for my friend Dowdeswell,” cried the old gentleman, laughing.

“Your friend Dowdeswell knows as much about the matter as you do. There will be no

public day next week at Greville Abbey, any more than at Hill Hall."

"Sorry to hear it, my dear! Ever since Dowdeswell's communication, I had been seeing visions of green fat, and dreaming dreams of goodly haunches!—But give me your exquisite reason, pray, Mrs. Massingberd, for being so positive.—Despotism is done for, my dear, even in the East!—The Sultan himself can no longer say black is white, and find a vizier to believe him.—*Why* will there be no public day?"

"Because Lord Greville is gone to spend a week or two in town."—

"In town?—I renounce my green fat without a murmur!—The lad should have thrown off in London a year ago; and we should never have heard a syllable about French madams or misses, or any rubbish of the kind. But how came the old dragon to consent?"—

"You had better ask her."

"It is more convenient, my dear, to ask *you*, who seem to be in her confidence."

“I understand your sneer, Mr. Massingberd. But you will scarcely dispute my authority when I tell you that Lady Brooks, who called here this morning on her way home from the Abbey, informed me Lord Brooks had carried off Lord Greville yesterday, at five minutes’ notice, to give evidence on some parliamentary committee.”

“I was sure it would require an act of parliament to get him out of his mother’s clutches!” cried the squire, pretending to misapprehend her. “However, I’m plaguy glad to hear of his being in London; for Fred arrives there as to-day, and if the papers are to be believed, the fine folks of Queen Victoria’s time get up as many balls and feastings in July as those of the Regent’s did in June, or those of old George in the merry month of May. The young fellows may still find wherewithal to amuse themselves.”

“Considering that Frederick has been eight months absent from England,” said Mrs. Mas-

singberd, sternly, "I think it might be just as well if he came to pay his duty first to his parents."

"My dear, young men of the present day are not particularly fond of paying anything!" mumbled the squire.

"Lord Greville, however, made his way from Paris straight to the Abbey, in less than eight and forty hours."

"Please to add that his mother was forced to get up a nervous fever to flog him up to the winning post!—I dare say, my dear Mrs. M., if *you* are inclined to oblige Fred with a dangerous illness—"

"I content myself with the affection of my daughters, without troubling myself concerning the undutifulness of my son," observed the old lady, sententiously; "and have as little wish to see him at Hill Hall, as the Countess has that Lord Greville should ever quit Greville Abbey."

The cause assigned by Mrs. Massingberd for

Greville's abrupt journey to London, was for once the true one. A petition nearly concerning his borough interests requiring the evidence of Lord Brooks, the old gentleman, delighted to prove to the Grevilles the importance of the duties to which he devoted himself for their sake, chose to demand the sanction of the noble minor's presence and support.

The proposal was a godsend to Greville. Even the Countess had no reasonable objection to assign. She was beginning to fear, moreover, that her son, like the mother of mankind, might grow so weary of a tête-à-tête in the garden of Eden as to fall a prey to the first temptation. He might even, in a moment of despair, determine upon a precipitate return to Paris, and pronounce at once her sentence and his own. Compared with this, a visit to London, under the sage mentorship of Lord Brooks, was indeed a minor evil.

"I have one promise to exact of you, my dear Hugo," observed the Countess, at the mo-

ment of their hurried parting ;—"that you will neither quit England, nor pledge yourself in a matrimonial engagement, without my sanction."

"Granted, my dear, good, anxious mother," cried the Earl, in all the elation of spirits consequent upon his unexpected release—"granted from my heart and soul !—Don't be afraid !—I shall only be a week absent, and will neither cross the Channel in the interim, nor bring you home a wife. Is it possible that you have any real apprehension of my committing matrimony in this way, at half a moment's notice?"

"I don't know that I entertained any *real* apprehension of your being drowned while you were at Eton," rejoined the Countess, regarding her handsome, animated son, at that moment, with genuine tenderness ; "yet when did I ever refrain, on your return to school after the holidays, from renewing my strict prohibition against bathing?"

"I never till this moment was able to under-

stand," thought Lord Greville, as he jumped into the carriage and drove off towards Brookfield Manor, "what it was that made me so passionately fond of the water!"

CHAPTER VI.

Il savait se mettre tout d'abord en des termes excellents ; mais il se trouvait toujours au même point que le premier jour. Sa vie était un préambule éternel.

PAUL DE MUSSET.

LORD BROOKS was a harmless, fussy little man of a certain age, whom nature had stamped with insignificance, and the Heralds' Office with a peerage. He would have been well enough, small as he was, had he been content to remain as nature made him ; but a certain nervous consciousness of deficiency, induced him to enhance his personal dignity by emphatic mysteriousness of carriage.

He seldom spoke out of a whisper,—was apt to harpoon himself to a friend's buttonhole and lead him into some remote corner to inquire whether it were likely to rain,—had his tailor's letters marked private and confidential,—and indulged in nods of the head as significant as the far-famed gesture of Lord Burleigh.

There are people in the world weak enough to be imposed upon by the pomposity of Hop-o'-my-thumb, when arrayed in the seven-leagued boots of the ogre ; so that the pains-taking consequentiality of Lord Brooks was far from thrown away. He had adopted a pursuit, moreover, peculiarly appropriate to his pretensions, inherent and inherited. Lord Brooks had a prodigious taste for greasing the wheels of the great engine of the state. A mere subordinate, he fancied himself an invaluable party man ; just as a candle-snuffer pretends to be an actor, but is content to snuff the candles, so long as people are content to fancy him one of the Roscii. Being no orator, (as Brutus is,) he

satisfied himself with lending his aid to ministers by active attention to the parliamentary interests of his county.

No man in England understood the science of boroughmongery better than Lord Brooks ; and if he congratulated himself on his rare good fortune in obtaining, for so many years, the management of the parliamentary interest of his young neighbour of Greville Abbey, most people were of opinion that the troublesome charge could not have been undertaken by a political overseer better skilled in the art of voter-driving. It was a whim to which his lordship gave up his life as eagerly, as some men to collecting garden-bugs or classifying vermin ; secure from being considered weak or trifling, so long as their hobby is dignified by a place among the ologies. Comporting himself, moreover, in his official calling with a turgid solemnity such as Lord Grizzle might have envied, he filled his place as well as another, as a fractional representative of that abstract quint-

essence or quintessential abstraction, called, by the courtesy of nations, the wisdom of parliament.

The senate—the senate in its material form, rather than as the type of the constitution—was the Temple of Jaggernaut in which his lordship bowed the knee. Instead of crying “a plague o’ both their houses,” *he* daily invoked blessings on both Lords and Commons! He would rather have found himself speaker of either the one or the other, than sovereign of the realm; nay, the privilege of British sovereignty which he most envied, was that of addressing the senatorial “lords and gentlemen” twice a year from the throne, in a strain of “taffeta terms precise,” bold as the thunder of the property-room, and worthy the grandiloquence of the state papers of the celestial empire.

Parliament,—parliament,—he could talk of nothing but parliament! “Did they make a house?”—“Has the house divided?”—“Is the house up?”—“What majority?”—were the only

questions Lord Brooks ever thought of addressing to the friend who shook hands with him in the street. Even at his country-seat, his discourse was ever of the thews and sinews of his false god,—corporations and registrations,—votes and voters.—His society was regulated by the dial of his parliamentary interests. He bore with bores even greater than himself, if strong supporters on the hustings; and seldom gave away so much as a brace of pheasants or a pineapple without some view, remote or proximate, to a general election. Happy the country, to sweep the crossings of whose constitution affords occupation so harmless to an elderly gentleman of Lord Brooks's importance.

Such was the dwarf Polonius who succeeded to Fred Massingberd in the task of bear-leading the Earl of Greville; enchanted to add this pleasing duty to that of shedding oil on the tempestuous waves of the corporation of Squeamington. Greville being still a minor, his lordship regarded and treated him as a boy; and as

they travelled up to town together, proposed to take him to Bellamy's, and put his name up at Brooks's and Arthur's, much in the tone that he would have promised Lady Cobham's little boy to take him to the Zoological Gardens.

"Between ourselves," whispered Lord Brooks, though as they were alone together in the carriage, it would have been difficult for a third person to intrude just then into his confidence, — "*between ourselves*, my dear young friend, it will be *just as well* that no one should be made aware of the *motive* that brings us to town!—Let the *world* suppose you are tempted by Almack's, or any other of the frivolous diversions of the youth of the age!"—

"But since the minutes of the committee are published—" observed Lord Greville.

"They are *never* correctly reported; and though *published*, seldom *read*!"—resumed the old gentleman, in the same mysterious whisper. "You will be printed into Lord Neville,—or *perhaps altogether overlooked*. As, however, your

sole object in London *is* to give your evidence, I recommend you, my dear young friend, to take up your quarters at one of the hotels at Charing Cross or Spring Gardens,—*as nearest to the scene of action !*”

Lord Greville, pre-determined to take them up at the Clarendon for a directly contrary reason, remained prudently silent.

“ You need not *say* that I gave you a *hint on the subject*,—for people are too apt to assign unaccountable *motives* for one’s advice ;—but *I* recommend you to try Morley’s !”—said Lord Brooks, in a still more confidential whisper. “ Morley’s is an excellent place for people who have business at the House.”

That night, when Greville found himself comfortably established at Jacquier’s, he could not but smile at Lord Brooks’s selection of a house of call for stage coachmen, in order to place him within the jurisdiction of his own highly parliamentary residence, looking into St. Margaret’s church-yard !—

Anxious letters, meanwhile, were on the road from Lady Greville to her friends, announcing the arrival of her son, and requesting their good offices in his favour; and on the morning after his arrival, the breakfast-table of the Earl was covered with little pressing billets of invitation. Lady Louisa Clare sent him opera tickets, — Lady Dawdle vouchers for Almack's, — Lady Mary Macmichael an invitation to a breakfast, — Lady Hardy an invitation to dinner. — Myrrh, aloes, and cassia were offered to him from all quarters.—

“ See what it is to have a handle to one's name, and a fine rent-roll appendant to it !” cried Fred Massingberd, who, having arrived at the Clarendon, according to his father's prediction a few days before, soon found his way to the apartments of Greville. “ St. George and I have been shewing our faces in the park ever since Thursday, and nothing in return for it but a few tailor's bills and shop-cards; while you, after scarcely twelve hours in town,

are in some danger of being torn to pieces by the dowagers!"

"I will make over their civilities to you, if you will accept them!" replied Greville. "I was congratulating myself on knowing nobody in town!"

"Thank you for my share of the compliment!" cried Fred. "But, tell me, Grev, —in the name of Providence, how did you contrive to slip your chain? So you were decoyed away from Paris on false pretences, eh?—It seems Lady Greville contrived to get a sham certificate, like a prima donna who wants to skip rehearsal for a party to Richmond!"—

"I do not understand you," replied Lord Greville, with rising colour.

"The deuce you don't!—Why, I mean that you found all well at home (*comme disent les épiciers*) when you returned to Greville Abbey?"

"I found my mother considerably recovered

from her indisposition," replied Lord Greville, calmly.

"Pho, pho, pho!—There was never any more the matter with her than with *me*!—It was a sell, my dear Grev,—a flagrant sell!—My father's letters apprized *me* of the whole intrigue. By the way, my governor has turned up a trump. He has not only booked up my Christmas bills, but, on the strength of a legacy from some cursed old maid of a cousin, put five-hundred into my pocket for a fresh start! To return to the nervous-fever hoax, — Madame la Comtesse was quite right to fire a great gun as she did, to bring you to! It would have been the devil and all, Grev, my fine fellow, if those people had hooked you!"—

"I am still at a loss to understand your meaning!" said Greville, as coolly as possible, while his blood boiled at the double insult. Yet, however disposed to resent Fred Massingberd's accusations, there was so much incontestible truth in his statements, that Greville

began to fear his credulity had been practised upon. "While you talk in this random strain," he continued, "I shall be afraid to ask you for news of my Paris friends."

"Wait till Achille de Cerny arrives, then; who is coming over for the Cowes regatta," replied Fred. "Think what asses those French fellows make of themselves, by their Anglomania! Not one of them knows a horse from a cow,—yet they must needs institute a turf!—Not one of them can keep his saddle over a grip,—yet they must needs attempt steeple-chases!—Not one of them can walk a mile,—yet, last year, we had half-a-dozen Frenchmen on the moors!—And now, by Jove, they are going to try a yacht club!—The exploits of our fellows at Cherbourg have driven them wild; and Cerny, who is squeamish in crossing the *Pont Suspendu*, fancies himself up to a cruise!—Think of Cerny in the Bay of Biscay,—think of Cerny in a stiff breeze!"

"And when does he arrive?" inquired Gre-

ville, trusting that from *him* at least he might derive authentic information concerning his friends in the Faubourg.

“ To-day,—to-morrow,—next week !—’Pon my soul, I don’t know !—I think St. George told me he had got a subscription at Almack’s for him. But what on earth will you do to amuse yourself in town, Grev,” demanded the dandy. “ You don’t belong to Crockford’s,—you don’t belong to the Travellers’,—you don’t belong to White’s,—you don’t belong to anything !”—

“ I belong to myself,—a person for whom I have a great regard,”—replied Greville, smiling. “ Were I a club-man, like yourself, I should probably be far less my own master. To-day I dine in Clarges-street, with the Hardys.”

“ Already set up as a target for one of those flaxen-haired cherubim of daughters !”—

“ Were I to put much trust in your assertions, Fred, I should have reason to be sufficiently vain,” said Greville. “ You would have me

believe that all the women in the world are on the watch to marry me !”

“ And so they are !—To do you justice, you’re pretty nearly the best-looking fellow in town,” cried Fred, examining his friend. “ Blin has done wonders for you,—and if you were but a trifle more *dégourdi*—”

“ Come, come ! spare my blushes,” interrupted Greville, laughing—

“ Hear me to an end ! I was going to say there might be some excuse for that foolish woman in the Rue St. Dominique falling in love with your *beaux yeux*. But that if, instead of being five feet ten and shaped like the Apollo, you were as wry-necked as Prince Torticolis and as ugly as the devil, Greville Abbey and its thousands a year would still make an angel of you in London. I see what they are all at. But be on your guard, my boy ;—keep a sharp look out or, by Jove, you will find a young Countess of Greville standing by your side in St. Georges’ church before you are a month older.”

“ I rather think not,” replied Greville, flattered against his better judgment at the idea of being an object of such universal courtship.

“ I have no heart to dispose of.”

“ Who asked for a heart?—Pin-money and jointure,—diamonds and rubies,—are very good substitutes, as times go, for sighs and sentiments,” cried Fred. “ And now, having wasted half a minute of our precious time upon those perfections of insipidity, the English Misses, come with me to Elmore’s, and give me your opinion of my new hack.”

Massingberd felt almost injured on learning that Greville had an appointment with Lord Brooks; and that, for the first time in his life, business must take precedence of pleasure.

“ Lord Brooks?—What on earth have you to do with that pragmatistical old ass?—Parliamentary business?—Pho, pho!—You’ll have enough of that two years hence!”—cried Massingberd, waxing warm—

“Two hours hence, more likely,” replied Greville; “for as the only pretence for my stay in town is this abominable committee—”

“Well! I suppose you must have your own way,—that is, I suppose you must have old Brooks’s!—But don’t you intend, even in London, to emancipate yourself from Oxfordshire?—Can’t you have enough at home of the squire-dom of your county without wasting a day in town upon such people as the Hardys?”

Lord Greville shrugged his shoulders. “The Hardys or others, *ça m’est égal!*” cried he. “There is nothing and no one in this great city of London likely to rouse me from my phlegmatic indifference.”

Again, but vainly, did Fred offer his services as cicerone to the haunts and resources of the roué world.

“*Plus tard!*” was all he could obtain in reply.

“Better late than never,” rejoined the Crock-

fordite, as he lounged off to the horsedealer's ; but he was beginning to fear that Grev would turn out a spoony after all. There could be but two motives for such listlessness as that of the Earl,--to be in love or in debt. The latter contingency, so familiar to Massingberd, was clearly not the evil in the present case. It was, therefore, only too probable that his Lordship's heart and understanding were still under embargo in the Rue St. Dominique.

Meanwhile the dinner-party in Clarges-street surpassed in dulness even the predictions of Massingberd. The Hardys seemed to make it their study to disgust him with the insipidity of an English family circle.

From an exaggerated idea of the shyness of Lord Greville, Lady Hardy had impressed upon her daughters that they must not alarm the timid youth with too much talking, or attentions too assiduous ; as he was doubtless on the watch against all attempts for his captivation, and if to

be caught at all, it was only by maintaining towards him a grave and careless reserve. The three poor girls, accordingly, received their important guest with three awkward curtseys,—accepted his invitations to drink wine at dinner with three silent bows,—and concluded their civilities by three anxious blushes when, immediately after coffee, Lord Greville rose to take leave. To remain among them another half hour was impossible. Sir Thomas had entertained him all dinner-time as an old English gentleman is too apt to entertain a young one, with a series of questions concerning his travels and pursuits that would have done honour to the catechisms of Pinnock : while Lady Hardy, overpowered by the happiness of having the great match of her county under the same roof with her daughters, sat mute and motionless, like other anglers, patiently watching the float for the first indication of a nibble.

Greville seized, as a pretext for so early a

departure, his engagement to a ball at the Marchioness of Wirksworth's, to which he had received an invitation through her ladyship's nieces, the Lady Dronelys; but the family dinner-party so completely deadened his spirits that he resolved on hastening at once to his hotel. In traversing Berkeley-square, however, the crowd of carriages round Lady Wirksworth's door attracted his attention; and on hearing, through the open windows, snatches of a favourite set of quadrilles, from Lucia di Lammermoor, associated with reminiscences of Paris, he determined to look in for a moment, at the hazard of deepening the dye of his *vapeurs noirs*.

The announcement of "The Earl of Greville," was instantly whispered from domestic to domestic up a lofty staircase, wreathed with roses, and crowded, like Jacob's ladder, with ascending and descending angels.

There would have been no difficulty in dis-

tinguishing the Marchioness, even without the inclination of the groom of the chambers towards the ear of a perpendicular lady in an inauspicious turban, standing directly in the doorway, as if by way of architectural support ; for Greville saw in her a petticoated fac-simile of her brother, his mother's stately friend Lord Droneham. The frigid formality of the curtsy she vouchsafed him, was almost overpowering. Lady Wirksworth was a woman of some account in the fashionable world ;—unexceptionable in her conduct and company,—a very model of social propriety ; but she was hard and stiff as an alligator's tail. Not a word of welcome to the new comer,—not a smile of encouragement.—It was enough that she permitted him to be there. Of the *agrémens* of life, Lady Wirksworth knew nothing ;—the art of pleasing was the only art beneath her notice.

Discouraged and abashed, Greville looked vainly round for a single familiar face. Cold looks of investigation were fixed upon the en-

trance of the stranger. As he was one whom no one appeared to know, no one cared to know him. A few of the young men lounging about, perceiving something in the cut of his Parisian coat that differed slightly from their own, set him down as a tiger; and poor Greville, apprehensive of making his retreat too precipitate, could only fix himself with his back against the wall, till the conclusion of the quadrille enabled him to go in search of the Lady Dronelys.

“Fred Massingberd certainly reckoned without his hostess in fancying that I should be *too* warmly welcomed in London!” mused the Earl, as, one after another, the beauties of the evening honoured him by a cold stare, and went their way; and it was perhaps in repayment for their ungraciousness, that he began to play the critic in his turn, upon the slovenliness of their dress, and the ungainliness of their deportment. The room was ill lighted—the floor was mean. There was nothing of the brilliancy—nothing of the *air de fête* of a Paris

ball. People seemed to be there because they could not help it—not for any pleasure they found in the entertainment. The women wore their ill-set, ill-cleaned diamonds as if they would have considered it an act of coquetry to dispose them with taste; the men to dance, as if it were an act of derogation to shew civility to their partners. Such was Greville's *résumé*, after comparing the ball of Lady Wirksworth with the gracious, graceful fêtes of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Still more disagreeably was he impressed by the multitude of quizzical chaperons disfiguring the ball-room. Old ladies from sixty to eighty, and old gentlemen from sixty to a hundred, were seen nodding their heads and turbans in every direction. The dancers were girls and boys; the rest, mummies. Few or none of those fascinating creatures, who, retaining the freshness of youth in combination with the winning graces of matronhood, constitute the real attraction of a ball-room. After looking on for a quarter of

an hour, Greville turned away without the slightest interest in the scene. There was nothing to captivate the eye of the mere spectator. Already he had made up his mind not to enter another ball-room during his stay in London.

Two withered faces, beaming with gracious smiles, presented themselves at that moment before him,—the Marquis of Droneham and Lady Jane—profuse in their expressions of regret at not having been there to present him in form to the hostess. And now, departure was impossible; for no sooner was the inquiry set on foot by all present, concerning the good-looking stranger to whom Lord Droneham was paying such marked attentions, answered by Lady Wirksworth with the intelligence that it was Lord Greville of Greville Abbey, the greatest match of the day, than every one present was clamouring for an introduction. It was in vain the Lady Dronelys assured all the mammas of all the daughters that he was no partner for them, that he never danced; they insisted upon know-

ing him. In that single moment, he had become the *point de mire* or *fleur des pois* of the admiring ball-room. If he did not dance,—he deserved to dance,—he ought to dance,—it was his duty to dance. With such a figure and so elaborate a toilet, it was clear that the vocation of partner was marked out for the Earl of Greville.

Could the Countess have conjectured, twelve months before, when her apprehensions invested with such glowing colours the temptations likely to beset her son in a London soirée, the perfect sang froid with which Greville was fated to parry the attacks of the most enterprising chaperons, and the blind indifference with which he was likely to contemplate all that was fairest of the circles of fashion, she would perhaps have spared the soul of poor Anodyne an additional weight of mendacity, and herself and her travelling carriage the task of a journey to Naples!

CHAPTER VII.

Médisant comme une femme ; et menteur, comme un homme d'esprit.—BRUCKER.

“ALREADY!” was the involuntary exclamation of Lord Greville, when, the following morning, he saw his name figure for the first time in divers paragraphs of the morning papers. Though but a day in London, he had become the legitimate prey of the manufacturers of polite intelligence!

Under the name of “The Earl of Grenville, from Grenville Abbey, at the Clarendon Hotel,” he was announced among the arrivals;—“Sir

Thomas Hardy entertained a select circle yesterday at dinner, at his house in Clarges street, including the Earl of Greenfield, &c. &c.”—purported to inform the fashionable world where he had eaten his mutton ;—while in the elaborate list of company present at the ball of the Marchioness of Wirksworth, he found himself, under the name of Granville, niched in once more, between those of the Earls of Rawdon and Timbuctoo! “*Et voilà comme on écrit l’histoire.*”

Three mornings afterwards, his name was not only correct, but classical. The Morning Post had him at its fingers’ ends. The Earl of Greville was cited among the loungers in the park,—among the spectators at the opera,—among the fashionables at a gay supper party afterwards,—at Lady A’s ball, at Lady B’s concerts,—and wherever else when two or three hundred of the gay world were gathered together. For the purpose of exciting the interest of the gossips, a very new name is almost as good as a name thoroughly established; and the Earl of Greville

was consequently as invaluable, for a time, as the Duke of Wellington or Count d'Orsay. Even Greville himself was almost as much amused as the gossips, to find with what accuracy his whereabouts was traced by the historiographers of the Strand.

First came an announcement that "The young Earl of Greville, who, on attaining his majority last year, and the enjoyment of a princely fortune, quitted England for a lengthened tour in the East, has lately returned to Europe with his valuable MSS. and collections, which are likely to be given to the public. His lordship is just arrived in London to take his seat in the house of peers." Then followed, in the course of a day or two, the inevitable contradiction:—"We were mistaken in supposing that the Earl of Greville had come into the possession of his splendid fortune. By the will of his father the late Earl, his lordship does not attain his majority till the completion of his twenty-fifth year." To this, a rival morning

paper, jealous of exclusive intelligence, immediately added, "The Earl of Greville, representative of one of the most ancient titles and finest fortunes in the kingdom, after spending the winter at Paris, has just made his *début* in fashionable life !" And if they did not yet seize upon him to be the turn of a paragraph headed "FASHIONABLE HYMENEALS," it was only because they economised the new title by way of making the most of it. It might be as well to allow his lordship a fortnight's flirtation, before they were so obliging as to furnish him with a wife.

Meanwhile he was become a lion ;—a lion, not *un lion*,—a lion in the London sense of the word. Any one but Fred Massingberd would have perceived that, when they entered together the opera-box they had taken in common with Lord St. George, it was towards Greville rather than himself the *lorgnettes* of the curious in dandies were directed. It was no longer, "Who is that with Fred Massingberd?"—or, "Who has Fred picked up?"—as on their first appearance ; but,

“Is not that Lord Greville with Fred?”—or more frequently, “Surely that handsome creature talking to Massingberd must be Lord Greville?” It was becoming essential for people of the world to know him ; and even people out of the world — people belonging to the *wide* world — were beginning to point him out to each other from their carriages in the drive, or their boxes at the opera, with “ Look, Sophy, look ! that handsome young man is the Earl of Greville.”—It is true the Sophys thus apostrophized usually fixed upon some dashing young gentleman in a cobalt blue coat, with mustachios as long as those of the Shah, to be the representative of the earldom. But still, even Baker street and Gloucester place possessed their ideal of the eastern traveller—the Parisian *élégant*,—announced by the six-penny trumpets of Fame that flourish quotiondianly upon our breakfast-tables.

“ I am sadly afraid, my dear young friend, that *our evidence* will not be called for till the *end of next week !*” whispered Lord Brookes,

drawing him into a dark corner of the staircase leading to the British Gallery, one rainy morning. “If I had entertained *the remotest suspicion* of this, God forbid that I should have *hurried you up from Oxfordshire*, in the *inconsiderate* manner I did,—*particularly* under the circumstances of my friend Lady Greville’s *delicate* state of health! However, I had a letter (*this morning*) from Lady Brookes, who tells me she has been passing *two days* at the Abbey, (for the *mutual support of their spirits*, I suppose, poor souls—uh! uh! uh!) and that your mother is doing *excellently well*!—Anodyne is quite satisfied with her. All, therefore, I have to recommend,—*since your stay in town is inevitable*,—is, that you reconcile yourself to the delay *as well as you can*.—Ten days will *soon* be over,—and *then*, DEO VOLENTE, we can *return to Oxfordshire in peace*!”—

With this philosophical admonition, the Earl found it easy to comply. Any place was at that moment preferable to the subjection in which

he had been living at Greville Abbey,—any presence more agreeable than that of his mother; whose every word, and look, and gesture, purported investigation and surmise. He was in a state of mind when the society of indifferent persons is acceptable; a state of mind in which we are unwilling to give an account of our thoughts, or decide upon our intentions; a state of mind when we strive to dazzle our eyes with momentary sunshine, lest they should penetrate the clouds of the past, or mists of the future.

“*Au jour, le jour!*” was every day his rallying cry,—as it is that of most young men of his age, not altogether in charity with themselves or others. Nor were his associates of a character to inculcate a graver school of philosophy.

“Have you no message for me from our friends in the Rue St. Dominique?” he ventured to inquire of Achille de Cerny, when they met at Almack’s.

“None!” replied the *petit roquet*, eagerly accepting his offered hand. “They were on the eve of their departure for Normandy when I came away. Every one, as you may imagine, was quitting Paris.”

“Perhaps you did not see them after my departure?”

“Yes, indeed!—we had a charming party to Franconi’s, a few days after Chantilly. But now I think of it, there were only the St. Pierres and La Roche Aymars;—Madame de Rostanges and her sister were not of the party.”

“You did *not* see them, then?”

“On the contrary,—I went to the Rue St. Dominique, to ask their orders for England.”

“And did Madame de Rostanges honour you with any commissions?”

“Yes, the Marquis begged me to bring him some sticking-plaister and some cow-cabbage seed. He is growing, you know, a determined agriculturist. *Il faut bien être quelque chose !*”

“ You are sure he charged you with no message for me ?” persisted Greville, anxiously.

“ He certainly bad me tell you something,— I swear I forget what !”

“ Can’t you try to recollect ?”

“ St. Sévron was there, holding forth as usual ; and we got into a dispute about some jockey question that drove everything else out of my head ; (St. Sévron will marry Eugénie de Nangis, I suspect, before the summer is over,— they are neighbours, you know, in Normandy !) And now I remember, Rostanges bad me tell you you were a horrible correspondent ; for that he had written to you twice without receiving an answer.”

Lord Greville, not having received a line from the Marquis since his arrival in England, could not refrain from an expression of incredulity.

“ I may be mistaken,” cried Cerny, eager to extricate himself from the corner under the orchestra into which he was pinned by Greville ;

“perhaps he said once,—though I think it was twice;—at all events, he said you were a bad correspondent.”

The twang of Weippert’s band roused Lord Greville disagreeably from the reverie into which he had fallen after this vague communication; and on raising his eyes, he saw that Cerny, or, as he was studiously designated in London, the Count de Cerny, was heading a wild company of galloppers, whose romping or racing produced in Greville’s mind a disagreeable reminiscence of the *guinguettes* of Paris.

“How damned flat and *décousu* is all this!” cried Fred, who, now that Lord Greville had attained the height of fashionable distinction, clung to him for the support which he had begun with imparting. “Just look at Cerny! steaming and panting like a losing horse after receiving desperate punishment! What can tempt him to perpetrate such enormities as a

galop, anywhere except at Musard's ; or even there, unless after a second bottle of champagne !”

“ Cerny fancies himself committing an Anglicism, whenever he does anything particularly offensive,” interposed Lord St. George, who now joined them ; “ and swallows the dose as glibly as a glass of *Parfait amour* !”

“ By Jove ! he is positively going to waltz !” cried Fred, with a look of well-feigned pity. “ Has poor Achille been put upon a dancing regimen by his physician ?”

“ You were yourself a determined valseur last season,” observed St. George. “ Be more indulgent, my dear Fred, towards the sins of which you have repented !”

“ I don't repent—I only regret that I waltzed to so little purpose ; for it was merely because I was making up to your cousin, Lady Louisa Clare and her three thousand a year,—neither of whom would have anything to say to me.

Heavenly powers ! how horribly these people waltz !—look !”

“ What effort—what labour !” cried Greville. “ How different from the easy elegance of Albert and Jules !”

“ Admire poor Lord Edward—rolling like a ship in a storm !” rejoined St. George. “ And the two Percevals—look at the two Percevals ! Do you remember Shelley’s Faust—

The giant-snouted crags, ho ! ho !
How they snort and how they blow !”

“ Hush, hush !” interposed Lord Greville, drawing them away from the upper bench, the fair occupants of which appeared to be lending an ear to their criticisms ; “ you will certainly be overheard.”

“ I wish we were likely to be understood !” cried Fred Massingberd, as ready in England to rail against the English as in Paris to find fault with the French. “ I swear I blush for

my country when I witness such monstrous exhibitions."

"The eye is certainly more satisfied in a foreign than an English ball-room," observed Greville. "I fear we must plead guilty to some deficiency in matters of taste."

"Deficiency?"—retorted Fred. "The English have about as much taste as the New Zealanders!"—

"We did well enough, so long as we did not pretend to any," observed St. George; "but since we turned virtuosi and dilettanti, it has been the devil and all with us!—A few years ago,—

"Some demon whispered, 'Albion have a taste,'"

and ever since, John Bull has been befooling himself in the eyes of the world like Tom Errand dressed in Beau Clincher's jubilee clothes!"

"Come, come!—you are really too bitter!"

cried Greville, laughing. "How can you find courage for severity, with such charming objects before you."

"Beautiful if you will, but I can scarcely say charming," replied St. George, following the eyes of Lord Greville towards the seats of the patronesses and the set formed immediately before them. "Their loveliness no one need dispute. But there is such want of soul, such want of sympathy, such want of everything that invites a man of sense to more than five minutes' conversation! A London woman is so *bornée*! A London woman has not a grain of interest in anything passing out of her own little circle."

"And pray what has the *Parisienne*?"—cried Fred. "In my opinion, Frenchwomen are the cursedest egotists under the sun!"

"At all events, a Frenchwoman talks about herself, her sensations, her affairs, so agreeably, that she makes us fancy them our own!" ob-

served Greville, unwilling to remind his friend how little he knew of the better order of those he was accusing.

“And then she *does* talk about her own,” added Lord St. George, “and not about those of her neighbour. Here, the women are all gossips,—all scandal-mongers !”

“I agree with you,” observed Greville, “that in Paris to be *mauvaise langue* is to be *mauvaise compagnie* ; but I have yet to discover the deformity of the forked tongue in my countrywomen. I grant you that their tone of conversation is far from piquant. But it is at least devoid of pretension ; and there is something peculiarly feminine in its very simplicity.”

“Hear, hear, hear, hear, hear !”—cried Fred Massingberd, forcing a laugh.

“How long is it, my dear Greville, since you rattled ?” cried Lord St. George.

“Ever since he became the little Benjamin of yonder august tribunal,” rejoined Massingberd,

looking towards the patronesses' bench. "Grev is now *l'enfant gâté* of May Fair—would you have him ungrateful?"

"I would have him consistent, if it were only to bring such whirligigs as you and I to shame," said St. George, not a little amused by so sudden a recantation, and unable to retrace it to the vexation arising from Cerny's intelligence concerning Mademoiselle de Nangis.

"For my part," cried Fred, perceiving that Lord Greville, to avoid their quizzing, had moved out of hearing, "I wish him no worse punishment for his inconstancy than to marry one of these feminine simplicities, and settle with her for life at Greville Abbey."

"Since you reside within a mile or two of him, my dear Fred, such a wife might be a safer thing than a Lady Greville from the other side of the water," observed St. George, with a knowing smile.

"As far as *I* am concerned, long may he remain single!" cried the *roué*. "I would rather

have him take the hounds and do something to humanize the neighbourhood, than resign himself at once to snobhood, as the respectable father of a family. Would not one think that old Droneham had heard me, and was resolved to circumvent my evil counsels? — See what a dead set he is making at poor Grev! — As if either of those superannuated Juliets of his had the least chance of bringing down such a Romeo!” —

“Not now, certainly,” replied St. George, while Lord Droneham, coolly hooking himself to the arm of Greville, walked him deliberately into the tea-room. “There are too many candidates on the list. Not a chaperon in the room but has an eye to Greville Abbey. Not a dowager in London but has booked Greville for her daughter. If he had remained at Naples all the winter, there is no saying into what his mother might not have bamboozled him. But the time is past. There is safety in numbers. Grev is no longer so shy or so mother-pecked, as to be at

the mercy of the first girl resolute enough to bully him out of his heart."

If there were grounds for Lord St. George's assertion, the chaperons in London received little encouragement from the Earl. Listless, preoccupied, indifferent, it was impossible for a man to lend himself more awkwardly to a flirtation. He did not dance,—he did not ride;—and in his own or Fred Massingberd's cab, was as inattackable as when looking down from his lofty height upon a ball-room, not even to be beguiled into the perilous pleasure of sitting out a quadrille. It might have been imagined that Lady Greville had expressly reared him in these anti-matrimonific habits, as a safeguard against maternal machinations.

By degrees, even the most resolute gave him up as a hopeless case.

"There is nothing to be done with Lord Greville;—take my word for it there is nothing to be done with him!" whispered the Mar-

chioness of Wirksworth to her nieces. “It is a waste of powder and shot, my dears, to lose your time in the attempt.”

“*Our time?*”—repeated Lady Maria, affecting surprise. “My dear aunt, we are only civil to him on his mother’s account;—we have the greatest regard for his mother. All the world knows that Lord Greville is not a marrying man.”

“Why, as he is only two and twenty—”

“Old enough to have distinguished himself as a *roué!*” persisted Lady Maria. “At Paris, there was a certain Lady Cobham—but for his mother’s sake we may as well let the story drop!”

The Marchioness thought otherwise, for to *her* the story was a new one; and when, in the course of the evening, “Monsieur le Comte Albert de Cerny” was presented in due form to her ladyship as to a giver of balls and patroness of partners, her first question regarded Greville

and the certain Lady Cobham, who had distinguished themselves by their flirtation at Paris.

“On the contrary, Lord Greville did us the honour of preferring a countrywoman of my own,” was Cerny’s reply. And forthwith, with significant smiles and gesticulations, he entered into the Rostanges’ chapter, in a tone calculated to enkindle against him all the pruderies of dowagerhood.

“A sad hypocrite, I fear !” was her ladyship’s observation when, a few days afterwards, the merits of the favourite of the hour were pointed out to her admiration by Lady Louisa Clare. “My nieces hinted to me that Lord Greville was not exactly what he appeared. With all his affectation of coldness and reserve, he has been already on the point of causing two divorces !”

“And with a face as demure as a saint in a niche !” cried Lady Louisa, laughing. “Nay, pardon me ! I did not mean to offend you ; only I don’t see what right we all have to tear

the reputation of a charming young man to rags, because we can't make him propose to our daughters or nieces."

"If you intend an allusion to any member of *my* family," Lady Wirksworth was indignantly beginning—

"You cannot suppose it!" hastily interrupted Lady Louisa. "Greville is three years younger than the youngest of the Lady Dronelys:—*they* are of course out of the question. Nay! I wish *everybody* was out of the question!" cried she, affecting a more moral strain. "It is one of the disgraces of London society that a young man of fortune cannot shew his face among us, without requiring the protection of the police."

"Your ladyship speaks feelingly!" sneered Lady Wirksworth, aware that the jointure of Lady Louisa Clare had attracted the homage of half the fortune-hunters about town.

"Oh! a woman can take good care of herself!" replied Lady Louisa, gaily; "we are privileged to frown away the most enterprising

adventurer. But a man cannot play the savage. A handsome young Lord, with so sweet a smile and such rich brown hair as Greville's, must not be *too* brutal in his announcement that Miss-traps and spring guns are set against artful ladyships on his premises."

"Nevertheless, I fancy the artful ladyships do not find him very encouraging!" observed Lady Wirksworth, significantly. "The other day at the Greenwich party—"

"Ay! by the way—the other day at the Greenwich party, he was more than usually absent and uncivil!" cried Lady Louisa, detecting at once the Marchioness's allusions to her own unsuccessful efforts to enliven him. "Even to me, with whom he is more at his ease than with other women, both as the cousin of his friend Lord St. George, and one to whom his thousands a year are of less importance,—even to *me* he was as high—as high—as high as yourself, my dear Lady Wirksworth, when frowning out of your drawing-room some country cousin.—Shall I tell

you why?" she continued, rapidly, as if to intercept the angry retort of the Marchioness. "Because that chattering Frenchman, whom some one or other introduced into the party—"

"If you allude to the Count Achille de Cerny, he was introduced by *me*," interposed Lady Wirksworth, with much majesty.

"Exactly!—because that chattering Count Achille de Cerny, who was introduced by your ladyship, seized the occasion just before dinner to give him unwelcome intelligence of his friends in Paris."

"Intelligence of his friends in Paris?—Of what nature?"—cried Lady Wirksworth, forgetting her resentment in her curiosity.

"I refer you to your friend the Count. That it was far from of an agreeable nature I infer, because Greville touched nothing at dinner but devilled white bait, drank only iced water, and called for his carriage before the dessert was on the table."

“It must be owned he was no great acquisition to the party,” said the Marchioness.

“He might have been, but for the officious Count, who was none at all!” retorted Lady Louisa. “From that evening, I have not met Lord Greville at a single ball. St. George told me this morning that he is prosed to death by some election committee, to which Lord Brooks pins him down as a public example. But I am convinced, poor fellow, he has something on his mind; and that while all the world is intent upon his committing matrimony, *he* is in much greater danger of committing *felo de se*.”

“As you observed just now,” said the Marchioness, turning maliciously upon the pretty little widow, “it were perhaps as well if we troubled ourselves less with what Lord Greville may be intent upon committing. However, we have but a few days longer to indulge our surmises. Parliament will be prorogued next week; and then all the false pretenders who affect to be detained in town for the good of

the nation, will be forced into the enjoyment of their country seats."

"Don't assume such a tone of menace," cried Lady Louisa Clare, rising to take leave. "*I* have no country seat!—I am going to Cowes.—You will perhaps become too envious of my happiness, when I tell you that I have given rendezvous there to my cousin St. George and his yacht, to your chattering Count, and to Lord Greville."

CHAPTER VIII.

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus ;
Another thing to fall.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE information alluded to by Lady Louisa Clare as having cast a damp on the spirits of Lord Greville at his Greenwich party, was a report communicated at the suggestion of Fred Massingberd,—that a day was actually fixed for the marriage of Eugénie de Nangis with the Comte de St. Sévron !

Greville had no motive for suspecting the accuracy of the intelligence.—Cerny was in close

correspondence with half a dozen *lions* of the jockey club, and supposed to be in clandestine correspondence with the Hotel de St. Pierre. What more likely than that among other gossip, any one of them should have mentioned a circumstance so interesting to an intimate of the family of Rostanges?—

As he galloped his horse impatiently along the tortuous windings leading from the Crown and Sceptre towards the London-road, (much to the indignation of certain policemen and foot-passengers, particularly when they discerned by the light of the lamps that the harness was graced with a coronet,)—Greville reproached himself bitterly for the emotions excited by Cerny's information. What right had he to interest himself in Eugénie de Nangis's welfare? what right to object to her marriage with another?—St. Sévron was an estimable person, —a man of sense and honour,—a man to whom she might have attached herself in spite of the rejections which had marked her former insen-

sibility. The Comtesse de St. Sévron would doubtless be a very happy woman;—the Comtesse de St. Sévron, established in her sister's neighbourhood both in Normandy and the Faubourg, an invaluable addition to the happiness of Madame de Rostanges. He was forced to admit that nothing could be more eligible than the arrangement.

Still, in spite of himself, the name of the Comtesse de St. Sévron,—more especially of a Comtesse Eugénie de St. Sévron,—grated disagreeably on his ear. He gave a fresh cut to his horse every time the arrangement of syllables recurred to his imagination. The name of Eugénie took him back to Paris,—to the Faubourg,—to the Rue St. Dominique,—to Chantilly,—to the Château de Grangeneuve;—and strangely enough, as he pursued his hurried way along the Greenwich-road, instead of perceiving Dovor coaches or Camberwell omnibuses, — the Elephant and Castle, or the gas-lights of St. George's Fields,—poor Greville seemed

to contemplate the Arch of Triumph and the Porte Maillot; and to feel under his horse's hoofs, in place of the smooth Macadamization of Kennington, the rugged pavé of the Champs Elysées. He was living in the past;—living in the days when in lieu of the insipid nonentityism of the Miss Hardys or the frivolous nothingness of the Lady Dronelys, his soul had been soothed by the gentle courtesies of Madame de Rostanges, or incited by the intelligent companionship of her sister.

Such was the state of Greville's feelings when, on arriving at the Hotel, instead of keeping his engagements for the evening, he shut himself up in his room with a strict prohibition against interruption. For the first time since his arrival in town, real emotions were stirring in his heart. The cold superficialities of London life had scarcely availed to impart sufficient interest even to the passing day; and any deeper sympathy with the heartless throng appeared impossible. But in those who had

welcomed him as a brother, and confided in him as a friend,—in those who had received him without ceremony and conceded nothing to his worldly distinctions,—he was conscious of an interest not to be weakened by time or absence,—an interest such as lends enchantment even to the weariest ways of human life.

Already, since his arrival in England, he had ventured to address a few hurried lines to Sophie,—a few lines without signature, but of a nature to leave her in no doubt as to their origin. Not, however, in renewal of his past offence.—On the contrary, his object was to express his sense of her gentle forbearance; and entreat that, for one idle hour of infatuation, he might not remain excluded from her friendship. He asked only to be forgiven; he promised in return the humblest gratitude, the most irreproachable self-command.

But this letter remained unanswered. Greville had taken precautions, through the assistance of Giacchimo, that it should be delivered

into the very hands of Madame de Rostanges. He knew that it had reached its destination ; yet no reply was vouchsafed. He now resolved to address her a second time.

From Fred Massingberd he had gathered that the illness of his mother was understood to be a mere invention, to excuse his abrupt departure from Paris ; and Greville now readily understood the contempt testified towards his hypocrisy by Eugénie and Madame de Rostanges.

He submitted patiently to the imputation, however, till the intelligence imparted by Cerny. Unknown to himself, Greville had learned to dwell upon the insinuations of the Princesse de Chaulieu, of Monsieur de Rostanges, and even of Sophie, concerning the preference entertained for him by Eugénie, till the affection of Mademoiselle de Nangis was becoming essential to him. It was something to feel that there existed on earth a being unconnected with himself by ties of kindred, to whom his happiness was a first object ;—it was something more to

know that this preference was entertained by one so lovely, so gifted as Eugénie. With the egotism of his sex, he allowed himself to appropriate an affection, in the possession of which he had never deigned to testify a moment's gratification !

The rumours circulated by Achille de Cerny roused him somewhat rudely from his infatuation ; and he now addressed himself earnestly to Madame de Rostanges, no longer as a lover, but as a brother and a friend, imploring her to re-assure him concerning the prospects of her sister. Was her heart really interested in the alliance she was about to form, or was it a *mariage de raison* ?—Was it as a sacrifice to the persuasions of her friends, or of her own free choice, that she had resolved to give her hand to the Count de St. Sévron ?—

After despatching his letter, Greville flattered himself that the agitation of his feelings would subside. He had not prepared himself for the anxiety with which he should await the

reply. He had never, indeed, till this trial, fully appreciated the power of Eugénie over his feelings. Slowly, but surely, her charms, her excellence, the nobleness of her character had obtained a paramount influence over his mind,—his heart,—his destinies. On the eve of losing her for ever, he was fully conscious of her value. Greville found it impossible to mingle among the triflers of society. Amid his poignant anxiety of mind, he had no patience for the empty prolixities of Lord Brooks, or the turmoil of fashionable vanity; which interested him no more than if the pompous actors of the pageant were so many wooden puppets.

A letter bearing the Evreux postmark, and inscribed to his address in the same delicate hand-writing, *à pattes de mouche*, as the billet delivered to him by Eugénie in the salon of the Hotel de Rostanges, was at length placed in his hand.

For some moments, he was unable to open

it ; and even when opened, the consciousness to what extent his happiness was involved in the contents, rendered it difficult to decypher a syllable. At length, overmastering his agitation, he achieved the perusal of the following lines :—

“ I would willingly have written before. It was no unkind or resentful feeling that kept me silent. No, Greville ! From the moment your generous exertions conquered our friendship, my affections have never wavered.— I pitied you when I saw you betrayed by a bad impulse into treachery foreign to your character.— But throughout every vileness to which that folly caused you to descend, I condemned you only as a sister might condemn a beloved and erring brother.— I could not prevail on myself to resent your offence as personal.— It seemed impossible you could wish to injure and disgrace so true a friend.—

“ But I had no right, under all the circumstances, to become your correspondent without

the knowledge of my husband. His happiness and honour are in my keeping. The disparity of age between us causes him to assign double value to my attachment ; and the disappointment were proportionably great, did he find me falter in my duty. Judge whether I have a right to deceive this kind and confiding friend !—Forgive me if I express myself so badly.—I am no great letter-writer,—I can only speak from my heart.

“ But now, from the tone in which you renew your entreaties, I can no longer refuse to listen or reply ;—for your questions regard the happiness of my dearest sister. You ask me whether there is a probability of Eugénie’s marriage with our friend St. Sévron, and whether such an union would conduce to her welfare. No !—a thousand times no !—I once desired it. My peaceful existence taught me to appreciate the blessing of a lot of negative enjoyment. But since I knew you, Greville, my views have altered. Since I knew you, I have conceived

the possibility of a more elevated order of happiness, a nearer interchange of mind and affection, than is compatible with disparity of years. Not for myself:—my destinies are accomplished, and my heart resigned,—but for my sister. Eugénie is not as I am—indolent, calm, quiescent,—Eugénie is endowed with a loftier frame of character—a character more consonant with your own.—My sister is worthy of you, dear Lord Greville; she would assure your happiness, as you would confirm hers.

“This conviction it was that rendered me blind to the indiscretion of your frequent visits to our house.—I believed—believed from my inmost soul—that the attraction which brought you among us was my sister.—Conceive my mortification, my wonder, when that mad declaration burst from your lips, which I banish, henceforward, from my recollection!—You deceived yourself, Greville. In your secret soul, then, as now, Eugénie was your first object. You loved

me as a friend; but you love *her* as one who might impart joy and honour to the remainder of your days.—

“Reflect upon this.—You are free,—you are independent.—Your social position assimilates with that of my sister. I should not have dared suggest it to you,—for they tell me such is not the custom of your country;—but now that you have broken the ice by the avowal of so dear an interest in the happiness of Eugénie, I venture to ask why not pursue in your own behalf the inquiries you have urged so strenuously touching St. Sévron?—

“She knows not of my writing to you.—Never would she pardon my betrayal of her confidence, or the candour with which I have attempted to remove the veil from your eyes.—Answer me, therefore, without reserve or hesitation; for I pledge myself that your letter shall remain sacred;—exposed to no eyes but those of one who would fain subscribe herself your sister;

but claims in the meantime the title of your true and attached friend,

“ S. DE R.”

The perusal of this letter excited the feelings of Greville to a degree for which, notwithstanding the agitation of the preceding days, he had not prepared himself. A thrill ran through his veins at the mere sight of the handwriting, connected with so many wild emotions. For weeks past his recollections of Madame de Rostanges had been embittered by feelings of shame; and while still uncertain concerning the destinies of her sister, it was to Eugénie alone he dedicated the happier impulses of his heart.

But now, in spite of himself, in spite of his better reason, in spite of every sage resolution, the letter of Madame de Rostanges, however calculated to repress every sentiment connected with herself, served for a moment to renew his earlier impressions. As he read, he seemed to hear the melodious voice of Sophie

again addressing him. The tones of the more impressionable Eugénie were often stern,—often abrupt,—varying with the strong impulses of powerful feeling. But Sophie’s “voice was ever soft and low,—an excellent thing in woman.” And now, it seemed to breathe once more in his ears sentiments at once so noble and so feminine, that he could have fallen at her feet with the same impassioned reverence inspiring his former adoration.

Such is the weakness of human nature!—At Greville’s age, there exists little of the consistency of character with which the imagination endows its heroes. And though reluctantly convinced that he had never for a moment obtained an influence over the feelings of Madame de Rostanges, save as an object of affection to her sister, yet her hand-writing, the letter emanating from herself, and emitting the same peculiar fragrance as the note addressed to him in the Rue St. Dominique and long afterwards dearly treasured, called up a

train of fatal associations. He saw before him the angelic smile, the graceful gesture, which, day after day, used to welcome his coming; and which he then little attributed to the instigations of sisterly attachment.

To this unpardonable weakness, succeeded impressions still less excusable. No man becomes entangled in the corruptions of society without deterioration. *On commence par être dupe,—on finit par être fripon.* The clubs, with their coarse jests,—the coteries, with their false sentiments,—suffice to crush the noblest nature in the world; and though on the character of Greville they had wrought perhaps less than their usual measure of contamination, he was no longer the same confiding, ingenuous, warm-hearted being who had offered his hand to Fred Massingberd in the Maltese quarantine, and thrown himself headlong into the flames at the Château de Grangeneuve.

From the young men of the day with whom he associated, he heard nothing concerning

women, but heinous accusations. The voice of his *roué* companions,—and however despicable, it is a voice that by dint of noise and iteration makes itself heard,—was never weary of taxing them with vice and meanness,—accusing the married of dissoluteness, and the single of cunning. To listen to the assertions of such men as St. George and Fred, all the daughters were occupied with the delicate task of “catching” young men of family and fortune; all the mothers occupied with furthering their projects.

The very evening before, Fred Massingberd, whose conversation seemed flat, even to himself, unless when rendered piquant by impertinence, had attacked him with allusions to his French “*liaison*.”

“You flattered yourself, Grev, my boy,” said he, “that you were courted in the Faubourg *pour l’amour de vos beaux yeux*!—Not a bit!—They wanted you for that sister of Madame de Rostanges.—You were all but victimized.—The whole set were in confederacy. The husband

winked at what was going on; while the wife, who, though stupid enough, had *nous* enough to see that forty thousand a year was not to be sneezed at, made a pet of you solely with the malice aforethought of making you her brother-in-law."

"She never *did* make a pet of me!" replied Greville, in a husky voice.

"My dear fellow, do you suppose nobody has eyes and ears but yourself?—What other Englishman has ever been torn to pieces in the Faubourg as you were?—What other Englishman was ever established *au coin du feu* among them,—or invited *en famille* to their barns of chateaux?—What do you suppose was the cause, except your *million de rentes*?—You are a damned good-looking fellow;—so is St. George, who never so much as obtained a formal dinner among them. You are agreeable enough when you choose;—so I flatter myself am I;—yet when would old Rostanges have thought of asking me to his old barracks in Normandy?—

Les Etangs, indeed!—he wanted a gudgeon more in his *étangs*;—*et voilà !*”

Greville was hurt and angry,—far more hurt and angry than he saw fit to shew; yet involuntarily he assigned some credit to insinuation of which he would have died rather than admit the justice. It is one of the miserable consequences of living among the frivolous and worthless, that insensibly we adopt their worthless and frivolous judgment of the conduct of others; and worse still,—far worse,—that we even begin to question the motives of our own. The spirit of contemptuous analysis recoils upon ourselves, till we become victims of our own irony. No longer reliant upon professions of friendship or demonstrations of affection,—we doubt and misdoubt, till nothing appears real or secure. We are ever seeking the worm in the bud; or suspecting insidious ingredients in the lees of the cup of joy. The very relique once consecrated to our adoration in a secret shrine, is at length cast forth and trampled on as a

human bone!—Oh! what has the world to render in exchange for this lesson of blasphemy,—this utter desecration of the religion of the heart!—

On the morrow after Massingberd's bitter comments, arrived the letter of Madame de Rosanges;—a letter all truth,—all candour,—all generosity. Yet Greville could not forbear a momentary misgiving that he was a dupe!—Heretofore indifferent to the worldly advantages of which it was impossible to be ignorant, he had lately heard so much of projects to entrap him, that he was growing ungenerously mistrustful.

By degrees, however, he began to blush for his own meanness. A gradually awakening train of reminiscences brought before him, not only the mild womanliness of the gentle writer, but the generous warmth of Eugénie—of the impetuous, the almost disdainful Eugénie; who had never shewn him a token of deference,—never conceded an opinion to his;—who had

often reproved his weaknesses, ever disdained his attentions;—and who, if more tolerant of his society than that of the Comte de St. Sévron or the Marquis de la Roche Aymar, openly attributed her indulgence to his claims upon her gratitude as a benefactor,—as a foreigner upon her hospitality.

Sophie was doubtless mistaken in ascribing to her sister so decided a preference in his favour!—Madame de Rostanges was a partial observer. He had not been in company with Mademoiselle de Nangis since the Princesse de Chaulieu first pointed out her attachment; for it was on the very night of his foolish self-exposure, and on the morrow he had taken leave of her at the Hotel de Rostanges.

“A single day, nay, a single hour, spent in her society, would decide the question!”—mused Greville.

But how were his doubts to be cleared up?—To hazard the offer of his heart and hand while the slightest suspicion remained on his mind,

was an act of madness; and he had pledged himself to Lady Greville neither to quit England nor entangle himself in a matrimonial engagement, without her knowledge.

His first measure, consequently, must be to confide his project to his mother, and obtain her sanction to his return to Paris. It was due to her to refer himself to her opinion. It was due to himself to assert his independence, should she attempt an arbitrary exercise of authority without just cause for opposition.

“Certainly, my dear young friend,—certainly,” cried Lord Brooks, on receiving his application for release. “Believe me, I felt duly conscious of the *vastness of the sacrifice* I was imposing upon you, in requiring your attendance in town—at *this advanced period of the season*!—I fully enter into the *misery* of being inveigled into Richmond parties and dinners at Blackwall!—Nothing, in fact, but *a sense of duty to my country* and to the *important trust* I have undertaken in your behalf, ever induced

me to *exact* the favour of your appearance before the committee. *All, however, is now at an end!* — *I scarcely know*, indeed, what we have been doing here for the last six days; for though I *made it a point* to accept the Marquis's *invitation* — *to an official dinner* on Monday next, there is no occasion that MY *unlooked-for delay* should prove any tie upon your time!"—

So thoroughly was Greville of his lordship's opinion that, ten hours afterwards, his travelling carriage entered the court-yard of Greville Abbey.

CHAPTER IX.

Il y a de la cruauté à faire pèsér l'autorité sur celui qui ne peut se défendre.

CAMILLE BODIN.

IT were an edifying study for the curious in human weakness, to compute the number of empty phrases uttered in the course of the year, for the purpose of disguising pre-occupation of mind. Excusable enough, perhaps, in the chance dialogues which unite the boring and the bored in the hateful compression of polite conversation, such hypocrisy is unpardonable between those conjoined by the sacred ties of kindred ;—holding communion wherein, as in

prayer to Heaven, all hearts should be open —*all* desires known.

Throughout the tête-à-tête dinner that followed Greville's arrival at the Abbey, and the long evening following the tête-à-tête dinner, did the Countess persist in discussing the Squeamington Committee ; in all its leaden details of question and answer between the dealers in professional fibbery, and the amateurs of the same branch of the fine arts. Lady Greville cared nothing about politics ; perhaps because engrossed by her family interests, perhaps because "*contente d'ignorer bien des choses pour mieux entendre le reste !*"— She had studied them neither in their wide reference to the interests of the country, nor in their petty re-action in the organization of parties. Neither the borough of Squeamington, nor the assemblage convoked to analyse in the parliamentary crucible the exact extent of its corruption, were more to her than the pyramid of apricots in the dish before her ; yet, throughout dessert, she managed to question and cross-question her son

concerning both ; while Greville contrived to answer with as much plausible amplification, as if old Brooks were at his elbow, prompting the emptiness of his replies.

For some time past, Lady Greville had never been alone with her son without dreading some communication fatal to her projects for his establishment in life. Though she corresponded minutely with the Dronelys, hoping to learn from their gossip the detail of Hugo's London engagements, Lady Jane and Lady Maria could do no more than allude, on the Marchioness of Wirksworth's information, to his flirtation with a pretty widow, the cousin of his friend Lord St. George ; and acquaint her that after spending a fortnight in the full tide of the vortex of London, seen everywhere and seen cheerful and gay, he had suddenly retired from the world and been heard of no more.

This mysterious retreat it was that took Lady Greville so pertinaciously to Squeamington, or rather to the committee room in which its crimes

and misdemeanours were canvassed. She would have questioned him as coolly about Almack's or Lovegrove's, as she did about Lord Brooks's long-winded explanations, but for the inexplicable fall of the curtain in the middle of the piece!—His mysterious disappearance boded no good to her schemes!

Lord Greville on the other hand was false by the force of contagion. Satisfied that his mother was uninterested in all she was saying and hearing, and unable to guess the motive of her want of confidence, he began to form a thousand groundless suspicions which prevented his entering frankly into the subject nearest his heart. Yet who that saw the mother and her only son engaged together in such apparently earnest conversation, would have dared suppose that each was practising upon the credulity of the other!—

Luckily, the matter was not so urgent as to require immediate explanation. Greville determined to sleep upon it. So complete, though

so unavowed even to himself, was his subjection to his mother, that he dreaded to submit himself to her dispassionate scrutiny. Regarding the Countess as a mirror of prudence and heavenly serenity, he had not courage to portray himself as the sport of even a blameless passion. Never had he heard her voice raised in displeasure,—never had he seen her temper ruffled,—never her countenance disturbed. The nearest approach to anger into which he had ever found her betrayed, was in a peevish speech or two, at Paris and immediately after his return from France ; which, having no means of tracing to the foolish misapprehension concerning Lady Cobham, he attributed to vexation at being “sprighted with a fool,—sprighted and angered worse,” in the tiresome person of Sir James. Even then, however, her temper had scarcely done more than reach the point of “variable.”

At length, as the evening wore away and bed-candles were brought in, Lady Greville ventured

a bantering remark or two on the subject of London and its attractions.

“ I am not surprised,” said she, “ to find you return without a wife from the great mart of matrimony, because you pledged yourself to me, dearest Hugo, that I should not be dowagered without warning. But I suspect you had a hard fight for your liberty?—I am told that little rattling cousin of Lord St. George’s, whom nobody could bear at Naples, and whose journey to Vesuvius was called by Monsieur de Rohan, *une visite de volcan à volcan*—”

“ You cannot mean Lady Louisa Clare, my dear mother?” interrupted Greville. “ She is a woman of the sweetest disposition in the world.”

“ I was going to observe, that I heard she was the belle of the season this year; and need no other confirmation of the report than your eagerness in her behalf. Women are estimated by a man according to their value in the eyes of other men, rather than according to his own fancy. I perceive that Lady Louisa

is quite as popular as Lady Maria Dronely assured me."

"Lady Maria?—that withered piece of ill-nature!" cried Greville. "*She* then it was who represented me as a sheep leaping through the hedge after the rest of the flock,—eh?"

"No! she mentioned Lady Louisa Clare; it was I who suggested the motive of your homage."

"The motive of my homage,"—replied the Earl, unconcernedly.—"But why go on misleading each other thus!" cried he, suddenly ashamed of their mutual hypocrisy. "I have no wish to deceive you, mother; I am sure you do not wish to deceive *me*. Wherefore take precautions to acquaint you with what I am persuaded you know already?"

Lady Greville uttered not a syllable by way of encouragement or interruption. A nervous tremulousness of the lip alone denoted that she listened with interest.

"Between *us*, mother, there never should

have been a moment's concealment," cried Lord Greville. "I blame myself that there has been so ;—for with me, you have been so kind,—so free,—so open—"

A restless gesture betrayed the impatience of his audittress.

"—that a hundred times I have been on the point of opening my heart to you," continued Greville. "But I own, though ashamed to avow myself so susceptible,—I own I was embarrassed by your calmness, your dispassionate tranquillity. It seemed to *me* a sort of profanation to approach you with idle tales of attachment which—"

"Come to the point, Hugo!"—said Lady Greville, in a low concentrated voice.

"There is at present no point to arrive at, dearest mother. I was only about to say," he continued, again unconsciously taking refuge in words,—“that though you accuse me of having unjustifiably prolonged my absence, I should have delayed my return still longer,

but for the promise I made before quitting the Abbey, not to leave England without your previous sanction."

"Not to leave England?"—involuntarily repeated the Countess.

"Nay, do not look so alarmed! My absence would have been of no great duration. The Antelope would not have been in requisition. I was not going to the Archipelago again, nor to Egypt."

"Why tell me where you were *not* going?" cried Lady Greville, impatiently. "Why not say at once that you would return to Paris?"—

"I was *not* desirous of returning to Paris."

The Countess crossed her hands and sat resigned. There was no other leading question by which she could hope to extort his confidence.

"I wished—and I am now come to ask your sanction to my wishes,—to visit Normandy."

Lady Greville remained silent.

“ To visit the family of the Marquis de Rosanges,” continued he, seeing that she was determined on a full explanation.

Still Lady Greville answered not a word.

“ You may remember them in Paris, mother ? cousins to the Duchesse de St. Pierre, at whose house you enjoyed the only ball to which I ever knew you go, since I was a child.”

“ I remember the ball ;—I scarcely remember the persons to whom you allude,” observed the Countess, with the short abrupt accent of a person labouring with the repression of strong emotion ; “ a proof either of their insignificance or my own want of observation.”

“ I remember your being struck with the elegance and grace of their manners.”

“ Possibly. Nothing makes less impression upon me than grace of manner, because nothing is more deceptive.”

“ I thought, however, you might recollect them,” added Greville, almost bitterly, “ because I presented them to you as my friends.”

“ Still no great distinction!—You presented young Massingberd to me as your friend.”

“ In that I was wrong,” replied Greville. “ He had an anterior claim. I should have presented him to you as the son of an old friend of my father.”

“ It would not have prevented my discovering, my dear Hugo, that, like most other young men, your judgment was little to be relied upon in the choice of your associates; — that your preferences are actuated rather by the whim of the moment, than regard or esteem.”—

“ I have had little occasion to correct my judgment in such matters,” observed Greville, nettled. “ The strict seclusion in which I was brought up —”

He was stopped by a short, dry cough, indicating the displeasure of the Countess. “ I am wrong, mother, to risk offending you,” said he, checking himself, “ particularly at this moment, when I stand in need of all your indulgence. I ask it for myself; but I ask it also

for those who are dear to me. Do not, I intreat, judge harshly, or speak harshly, of Madame de Rostanges."

Still uncertain to which portion of the rumours communicated to her by Mrs. Massingberd to assign credit, the Countess would have been satisfied, had Hugo recommended Mademoiselle de Nangis to her forbearance, that the married sister was the object of his attachment. The earnest manner in which he pronounced the name of the Marchioness, convinced her it was Eugénie she had to fear. It was with difficulty she repressed a movement of irritation.

"Still deceiving me!"—cried she, at last. "Why not speak frankly?—Why not tell me in plain terms that you are in love with this French girl, and that the object of your visit to Normandy is to demand her hand?"—

"If I see you thus agitated by a mere supposition," Greville was beginning—

"It is no supposition," exclaimed the Coun-

tess, in the same abrupt manner. “Your friend Mr. Massingberd — your friend Fred, the son, if you like it better, of an old friend of your father,—sent the news into Oxfordshire six weeks ago. Your mother only remained ignorant of the fact of your attachment, till apprised of it, as a bitter pleasantry, by the old woman at Hill Hall.

“You knew it,—you were aware of it?”

“What other motive urged me to recal you so hastily from Paris?”

“Your illness a feint?” murmured the Earl, in a tone of regret, recalling to the Countess in a moment the indiscretion into which she had been betrayed. “Yet all the time I was with you here, previous to my departure for London, not a syllable on the subject,—not a word of advice,—not a word of remonstrance!”

“I was unwilling to force myself into your confidence,” observed Lady Greville, proudly. “The secret confided to Lord St. George and Mr. Massingberd would not, I conceived, be long

withheld from your mother.—The time is come.—I still await with patience the honour of your communication.”

“ Never,—while you treat me so unjustly and so unkindly !”—cried Greville, roused into some assumption of spirit. “ I had no secret to confide on my return from Paris.—I had no desire, at that time, except to forget that I had ever set foot in France.—I swear to you, mother, that my first impulse on forming any serious project connected with the Rostanges’ family was, to come and seek your advice,—to come and implore your sanction !—You smile—”

“ If you come to ask my sanction, Hugo, surely my advice were now somewhat too late ?”—

“ No,—on my soul, no !—Mother, you have no right to discredit my word. *I* have never deceived you. *I* have never devised pretexts to—”

Lady Greville started from her chair ; but as quickly sat down again, overmastering her anger.

“ Well, well, I will not recur, even in self-

defence, to a painful subject ! At all events, trust me. At all events, believe me when I assure you that, so far from its being too late to refer myself to your counsel, my only object in visiting the Chateau des Etangs is to exercise my observation on the conduct and character of Eugénie de Nangis, ere I ask your consent to offer her my hand."

Lady Greville contemptuously shrugged her shoulders.

" You conceive that, if I do not deceive you, I deceive myself?"—cried Lord Greville. "Again no !—Were I not perfectly sincere, what prevents my making those proposals by letter which I am inclined to temper with greater caution ?—It was because mistrustful of my own sentiments that I return to France."

" And it is because mistrustful of them that *I* require you to remain in England !" cried Lady Greville, with some vehemence. " I see in you a predestined dupe ;—and—"

“ That name must every way be inapplicable,” cried Greville, the colour flushing to his temples. “ Mademoiselle de Nangis is young, beautiful, irreproachable,—my equal in birth,—and if not my equal in fortune,—what do I want with money ?”

“ Nothing, except as an evidence that you are not the object of a scheme—a plot.”—

“ In that case,” again interrupted Greville, “ I am more fortunate in the instance in question than I should have been with most English girls of my own rank in life, since her fortune amounts to more than my annual income. Will that convince you of her disinterestedness,”—he continued, addressing his mother with an ironical smile.

“ So little, that I forbid you to return to France, or renew your most unfortunate connexion with this family!” cried the Countess, gasping for breath. “ Let it suffice as the motive of my aversion that they have caused

the first angry words ever exchanged betwixt me and my son !”—

“ It does *not* suffice !”—replied Lord Greville, no longer to be silenced by specious pretexts ;—his mother’s avowal of having beguiled him from Paris on false pretences, sinking deep into his heart. “ That motive has existed only during the last ten minutes, and your objections appear to have been conceived many weeks ago, on occasion of some groundless rumour. If you are willing to explain them to me, I am prepared to listen with candour ;—but if not—”

“ I am not prepared to explain more,” cried Lady Greville, losing all self-command, “ than that I refuse my consent to your marriage,—my consent to your proposal,—my consent to your departure from this country.”

“ Mother, mother !—It is thus that children are dealt with,” cried Lord Greville, rising from his chair. “ You are not reasonable,—you are not yourself !”—

“ So much myself that my legal authority shall be exercised to the utmost to prevent your accomplishing an act fatal to your future happiness !”—

“ Mother, listen to me !”—said Lord Greville, mildly approaching her.

“ No, Hugo !”—cried the Countess, repelling his advances, and preparing to hasten from the room ; “ nothing you could say to me on this subject would in the slightest degree influence my decision. All further discussion will tend to promote disunion between us. Be wise !—Do not persist in a pursuit that can end only in ruin and wretchedness.—Good night.—When we meet to-morrow, my dearest son, be all that has passed between us forgotten.”

Not even the conciliation of these parting words, however, availed to subdue the displeasure of Greville. No sooner had the Countess quitted him, than his repressed irritation burst forth. As with eager steps he paced the room, the mortifying dependence of his position stood

portrayed before him, as if viewed for the first time. Submitted in the pride of manhood to the authority of a woman,—the caprice of a woman,—for when is the authority of a woman other than caprice?—by what offence had he, a blameless child, so incurred the displeasure of his father as to be subjected to such chastisement?—What had he done to be denied the birthright of the poorest peasant on his estates?—Was it to be borne that, at an age when other men have controlled the destinies of nations, he alone should submit to such humiliating subservience?—

Then came the vexatious consciousness that his own supineness had been in a great measure the means of riveting his chain. So passive had been his obedience, that he had never been at the trouble of examining the exact extent of the Countess's rights and privileges. Surrounded by her creatures, seeing only men of the law to whom she *gave* the law, he had

accepted implicitly their exposition of the Countess's power over his person and fortune;—while the ardour of his filial affection prevented him from encouraging the hints of others, that he might find means of self-enfranchisement.

But now, the time was come when this pitiful subjection must be shaken off. The time was come when he must assert his own rights as a man, to think, feel, act,—if not to sign leases or execute deeds.—Two years of his legal minority were yet unexpired, —two years involving the happiness of his future life, if still to be subjected to the arbitrary control of one to whom the exercise of her own wayward authority was apparently more dear than the peace and honour of her son!—

At length, after an hour of bitter excitement, came the re-action of feeling common to all generous natures. He had said too much against his mother. He had taxed her too severely with selfishness, pride, tyranny; for after all, to

what tended her absolutism, but to secure what she believed to be his welfare? What had she ever done with a view to her selfish enjoyment? Wherein had she ever shewn a personal ambition? Had she not shunned, in earlier life, every temptation of vanity or weakness, — the pleasures of the gay world, the pomps of the great?—Had not her whole life been devoted to him?—Was he not her first object,—her sole object?—How pardonable therefore that, in the excess of her tenderness, she should somewhat overpass the boundaries of reason, to prolong the period yielding to her exclusive control the object of her exclusive attachment!—

Such was his final view of the case ere he retired to rest. Local influence once more preponderated. He was at the Abbey again; the Abbey, where his mother was a queen and himself a slave.—He could not fling off that overmastering influence.—

“ I will talk to her in the morning,” said he, as he ascended the gorgeously painted staircase,

and traversed the stately corridor leading to his bed-room. “I shall perhaps be less irritable, and my mother more amenable to reason. I was wrong to rush upon the subject so abruptly. I should have prepared her mind for my proposition.”

So little did he perceive that his secret had been wrung from him by the master spirit in whose hands he was still as plastic clay, taking the form and impress predestined by her will!—

CHAPTER X.

Qui eut pu supposer dans une femme froide et nonchalante en apparence, une résolution si sèche et si cruelle?—

SAND.

LET it afford encouragement to domestic despots in the husbanding their resources, to know that Greville, who for twenty years had been held in submission by steady mildness, found a new source of subjection in the outbreak of violence into which his mother at length allowed herself to be betrayed!—

Loving her as he did, revering as he had ever done her more than feminine gentleness, he lite-

rally dreaded to provoke anew the unaccountable excitement of which his avowals had been the origin. He could not bear to see that serene countenance flushed with anger; he could not bear to hear that gentle voice raised in altercation. In such a guise, she was no longer the same mother to whom from infancy he had dedicated every affection of his heart.

Greville dreaded the breakfast tête-à-tête awaiting him. Contrary to his custom, in an establishment where everything was custom, he strolled out into the flower gardens and visited the conservatories at the very moment of the ringing of the breakfast-bell; perhaps with the idea of appearing more at his ease when encountering Lady Greville hurriedly on the threshold, than by awaiting her at table. If such his object, he might have spared his pains. Her ladyship was far too able a general to leave occasion for such manœuvres on the part of her son. She had taken care that Mr. Dowdeswell should be present; and when Greville, blushing and

apologizing, entered the dining-room, received him with even more than her usual courtesy and tenderness: immediately resuming with her agent the discussion of atmospheric railways, and a project for a branch one on ordinary principles, which Dowdeswell was eager to establish on the Greville Abbey estate.

The Earl laboured hard to appear interested in a question nearly regarding his property,—nay even to *feel* interested; and Dowdeswell was startled to find that the young man whom circumstances placed before him in the light of a puppet, was in reality intelligent and replete with information. Greville exerted himself to be companionable. The society of men older than himself, into which he had been recently forced by Lord Brooks, had so far quickened his apprehensions as to relieve him from the fear of appearing too wise or too learned when talking like a reasonable being, which he had contracted among such companions as Fred and St. George; and he was fully prepared to con-

verse with Dowdeswell on the subject of railroad statistics in general, English and continental.—

The agent was delighted. He had anticipated only a well-bred, good-natured fellow in the young lord with whom he had scarcely exchanged fifty words since they took a day's fishing together, some five years before. And to find him well informed—to find him actually what the agent considered a man of sense,—that is, a man having figures in his brain and at his fingers' ends,—was a thing which he had never expected as the result of an Eton, Oxford, and Paris education.

It was in vain, however, that he glanced towards the Countess for sympathy in his approbation, at the close of her son's lively picture of the vaguely gigantic projects of Thiers for the railwayization of France. Lady Greville sat with iron brow and compressed lips; evincing no tokens of interest in a subject wherein she saw clearly that the prejudices of her son had been embarked by his Carlist

friends. Unconsciously, her eyes were fixed upon a gardenia which Greville almost as unconsciously had placed in his buttonhole, while traversing the conservatories. She remembered having seen him uniformly wear a similar flower in Paris. With her unlucky habit of seeking motives in trifles, she then attributed the whim to association with some preference of Lady Cobham. She now connected it with persons far more repellent to her feelings.

Already, she began to dread the departure of the agent; nothing doubting that her son was only waiting his absence as a signal for the renewal of their conversation of the preceding night; and great indeed was her relief when, on Dowdeswell's announcement that pressing business required him to ride into Squeamington, Lord Greville instantly proposed bearing him company.

"There are one or two questions," said he, "connected with the borough, on which I should not be sorry to consult you; for I own I felt

ashamed when referred to on the subject by Lord Brooks, of my utter ignorance of all that regards my borough interests and corporation questions in general."

This remark might have been strictly included in the category of those recently described, as purporting only to disguise the mental pre-occupation of the speaker. Yet the Countess's eye grew stern as she listened; for she heard in it indications of an intended assumption of power on the part of the Earl. Convinced that he cared as little as herself about county politics or borough property, his object was probably to express by collateral hints, his intention to act and think in future for himself. She consequently saw him depart with Dowdeswell for his ride, if not with a heavy heart, at least with a louring countenance.

The only one of the three perfectly satisfied with the arrangement, was the agent; who, with all due reverence towards the regent his noble patroness, was not sorry to find himself,

now that the term of her vicarious sovereignty was drawing to a close, promoted to the good graces of her successor.

Dowdeswell was a conscientious, active, able, practical man; who for twenty years had so completely devoted himself to the management of the Greville estates, that he took an interest in them beyond the mere earning of his salary, beyond the mere fulfilment of his duty, — nay, almost beyond the interest experienced by the noble owners themselves. The Earl was in fact almost a stranger, or rather almost a visitor, on the estate. There had been no motive to trouble him with details usually tedious to young men of his caste; and Dowdeswell often congratulated himself that instead of having to render his accounts and submit his plans to a spendthrift heir, defining timber as “an excrescence devised by nature for the payment of debts,” he was able to consult with a wise and prudent matron, intent

upon the permanent advantage of the property. It was consequently no small relief to him to find the young Earl not only uncorrupted by Parisian frivolity or London insolence, but an unaffected young man, and intelligent auditor. Poor Dowdeswell who, amid all his veneration for the mental powers of the Countess, had silently detected the deficiency of concentration inherent in every female mind,—the *case de moins* adverted to in our quotation from Champfort,—a deficiency sufficing, without the aid of physical inferiority, to place the sex in a secondary place in the great scale of creation, was almost ashamed of the satisfaction it afforded him to discover that he should shortly become accountable to one more fully qualified for the appreciation of his exertions.

After quitting Squeamington, they returned leisurely towards the Abbey ; when, at the close of a long morning spent in accompanying the Scotch forester through the plantations, and following the line suggested by their engineer for

the branch railroad, the Earl suddenly suggested a visit to the old squire at Hill Hall.

“Lady Greville said something, I thought, about returning to luncheon?”—observed Dowdeswell, with an air of consternation.

“We have past my mother’s luncheon hour,” replied Greville, looking at his watch. “By this time, she is out in her phaeton. I may, therefore, as well seize the opportunity of paying my respects to Mr. Massingberd.”

Released from responsibility towards the Abbey, Dowdeswell was delighted. He muttered something about having to consult the old gentleman about a new drill of his invention, as a pretext for not proposing to the Earl to proceed to Hill Hall alone; for having occasionally seen his family smart under the hauteur of the squire’s lady, he was not sorry to find himself announced as a morning visitor, in company with his patron the Earl of Greville.

The squire was “not at home.” What

squire ever *is* at home at four o'clock on a fine August afternoon?—Dowdeswell suggested, however, that they should follow him to his farm; a pretty accurate knowledge of the localities of which carried him straight to the spot where stood old Massingberd, with his hands in the pockets of his fustian coat, contemplating, over the gate of a meadow, a fine colt of his own breeding, concerning which he was taking those orders from his old coachman, which he fancied himself to be dictating. His visitors were beside him ere he was aware of their coming; and the cordial shake of the hand with which he received Dowdeswell, did not relax when the agent modestly pointed out by whom he was accompanied.

“Glad to see you, my dear Lord,—heartily glad to see you.—What news do you bring me of my son?”—cried Massingberd, too kind-hearted to visit on the son of an old friend a want of neighbourly courtesy which he was well able to trace to the interference of his mother.

“I did not see Fred for nearly a week before I quitted London,” answered the Earl. “I left town, indeed, in some haste, or I should have asked his commissions for Hill Hall.”

“How little we old folks understand what is going on among the young ones!”—cried the squire. “I fancied you and Fred were always together,—frequenting the same clubs and the same company.”—

“We *do* frequent the same clubs and the same company,” replied Greville with a smile. “But I have latterly been engrossed with what my friend is not exactly disposed to find an agreeable occupation,—business, parliamentary business.”

“I understood you were wanted in town about that rascally Squeamington committee,” replied the squire, much to the horror of the decorous Mr. Dowdeswell; “but I didn’t suppose it would occupy much of your time.—Brooks is the last man on earth to let an item of that kind of much-ado-about-nothing, out of his hands. He would grudge you the smallest bit of trouble,

the least possible inconvenience, that he could saddle on his own shoulders for the good of the nation. In my opinion, a specific office ought to be created by a grateful government for so devoted a patriot as my friend Brooks,—commissioner of sewers of the most high court of Boroughmongery.—Ha ! ha ! ha !—Dowdeswell, I see you have fixed the eye of a connoisseur on my brown colt.—You remember his sire, old Patroclus ?—Ay, but I suspect young Patroclus will beat the old 'un out of the field!—I intend him for Fred, my Lord,—what say you ?—A fine figure for a cab in Hyde Park, eh ?—what a chest !—what haunches !”—

Lord Greville, shrewdly suspecting that Fred Massingberd's principles in the great science of the road differed widely from those of his worthy parent in the fustian coat, was careful not to insult the memory of old Patroclus, or underrate the promise of Patroclus junior ; but, as he turned to accompany the squire through the meadows back to Hill Hall, satisfied the old

gentleman with praising the excellence of Fred's horsemanship, and his standing among sporting men.

“Why, yes,—Cobham assures me they have scarce a better seat in Leicestershire!”—said the old gentleman, thrusting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, as he was accustomed to do whenever, in his solitary walks, his thoughts reverted to his graceless favourite.—“My son-in-law swears Fred will make one of the crack riders of England, as soon as he has worn down a little of his coxcombry.—Natural enough at *his* age, a little coxcombry, eh, Dowdeswell!—But, between ourselves, Cobham chooses to overlook that the young fellow has paid his price for his whistle. Fred was laid up with broken collar-bones three times the winter before last,—to say nothing of the cursed steeple-chase, where he broke the back of a mare worth three-hundred guineas, and was left insensible in a ditch, from a purl that ought to have broken his own head!”

“He was unlucky, I fear, at Chantilly Races,” observed Lord Greville; aware, or fancying himself aware, that perfect confidence existed between the father and son, even on points usually kept sacred from paternal vigilance.

“No!—Fred did nothing at Chantilly, and he was right. No chance of either justice or judgment among such a set of cockney sportsmen as the French Jockey Club!”—observed the squire.

Greville was surprised, but remained prudently silent; Massingberd having informed him that a recent gift from his father was expressly intended to book up his Chantilly engagements.

“But I thought you told me you rode here together from the Woodlands?”—cried the squire, stopping short as they reached a gate opening through the old-fashioned orchard of Hill Hall, into its equally old-fashioned offices. “And here are the Greville Abbey servants just turning out!”—

“My mother, probably, on a visit to Mrs. Massingberd,” observed the Earl, with one of

those vivid blushes of which even Paris had not effected the cure. And the squire, naturally conceiving that the simultaneous visit was an understood thing between the Countess and her son, felt the warmth expire in his heart which had kindled up at sight of his son's friend, the son of his old friend, whom he had fancied attracted to his house in spite of the Countess, by kindly feelings of regard.

Had the old gentleman been a better interpreter of the human countenance, he would have perceived not only that the Earl was unprepared to meet Lady Greville, but that he only wanted courage to take himself off to the Abbey without hazarding the encounter. His natural good-breeding forbad, however, an act so ungracious towards Mrs. Massingberd ; and in a few minutes he was in the drawing-room, stammering through the civilities indispensable to the occasion ; while the Countess looked on with a majestic countenance, worthy the forty centuries which Napoleon announced to his

Egyptian army as contemplating its movements from the summit of the pyramids.

It was difficult to retain his usual urbanity of manner under such severe inspection. Nevertheless, he contrived to make proper inquiries after Lady Cobham,—her cross husband and sickly children,—glad or sorry at the proper pauses in Mrs. Massingberd's lengthy family details; and when subjected, in his turn, to the old lady's questions touching her son, he tried to recover his usual spirits and allude gaily to the London diversions of his friend.

“We shall have him here shortly, I suppose?” observed Mrs. Massingberd, divesting herself of the radiant air with which she alluded to the Cobham portion of her progeniture. “But that the preserves at Hill Hall are tolerably good, I doubt whether I should ever have the honour of seeing my son, (except in one of Count d’Orsay’s sketches,) now that I no longer go to town for the season.”

“And, by the way, Fred mentioned to me in

his last letter, my Lord, that he was engaged to you in October for pheasant shooting!" observed the old gentleman, as a check to the ill-nature of his spouse.

"You told me in Paris that *September* was the month in which you had promised some shooting to your friend?" demanded Lady Greville, in a tone far from likely to increase the cordiality of the party.

So defying, indeed, was her voice and manner, that the Earl, vexed at finding himself what he considered shewn up in presence of the Masingberds and Dowdeswell, found courage to reply—"September *was* the period fixed for our *battue* ; but the moment of my return from the Continent is so uncertain, that I have lately requested Fred to be with me the middle of October."

Lady Greville sat almost breathless. She was now, however, too well acquainted with the tender mercies of the neighbour she had in-

sulted, to hazard an explosion of wrath in presence of Mrs. Massingberd.

“ The Continent ? ”—exclaimed the squire,—unmindful of the agitation of either party. “ What, off again ?—why I was in hopes that between old Brooks for public life, and one or other of the Almack’s beauties for private, we should have nailed you down among us during your stay in town ?—There’s some excuse for Fred to be a rover. Fred knows that the old boy, his father, has no mind to put off his shoes before he goes to bed,—and that Hill Hall and its acres are not wide enough to afford occupation (or pottering) for both of us. But you, my dear lord, who have a stake in the country !—*You* who are wanted here,—you—”

“ You would make me very proud or very vain, if I durst believe you ! ” interrupted Greville, who saw his mother’s eyes fixed glaringly upon his countenance. “ But I can assure you that my friend Massingberd and myself may be

trusted abroad. We are genuine John Bulls at heart."

"You can't say what you may both be this time twelvemonths, if you get the habit of Frenchifying every time you find yourself dull in England!"—cried the squire. "Fred had the impudence to write me word t'other day, he would as soon be rolled up in a leaden coffin at once, as live in smoky England. I told him in my answer that the English are all the racier for being smoke-dried.—Ha! ha! ha!—Providence built us for our coal-pits, and our coal-pits for us. The sulphur of sea-coal preserves us against the humidity of the atmosphere. Dr. Anodyne will give you chapter and verse concerning a thousand diseases for which sea-coal smoke is a specific.—Ask Dr. Anodyne!—Dr. Anodyne is a favourite authority, you know, at Greville Abbey!"

It did not surprise Lord Greville to find his mother, at that moment, rise and ring for her carriage. Prepared by previous irritation, she

saw in this attack upon her favourite pacha, a personal insult. Her son's allusion to the old squire the preceding night as the friend of his father, the secrecy observed by Hugo that morning concerning his visit to Hill Hall, which she believed to be preconcerted for the purpose of consultation, all conspired to thwart and excite her; and Mrs. Massingberd, who on her own inauspicious visit to Greville Abbey had been favoured with a specimen of the violence into which the quietest stream may be lashed up by stress of weather, began to hope that her ladyship was brewing a storm likely to make itself remembered.

She departed, however, without an outburst. The same hissing murmur of inarticulate compliments passed between Lady Greville and Mrs. Massingberd, during their parting curtsies, that usually graces the adieux of elderly ladies, denizens of a country neighbourhood, who mutually wish each other at the bottom of each other's fish-ponds.

Greville was careful to loiter behind, while Dowdeswell and the squire escorted his mother to her phaeton, hoping the former would find occasion to allude to the accidental nature of their visit; more particularly when Mr. Massingberd returned, before the carriage drove from the door, having left the agent to place in her ladyship's hands the reins which the jocose old gentleman could not help trusting, as he hobbled back into the drawing-room, she might not, after her usual fashion, draw too tight.

Excited by the pleasure of seeing the young Earl under his roof in the same friendly way he had been accustomed, twenty years before, to see his father, he could not forbear indulging in a piece of squirearchical hospitality, and persuading his visitors to stay dinner. He even pressed the invitation earnestly on Greville when, upon Dowdeswell's return to them, he discerned from the agent's anxious face that such a breach of etiquette would be treason in the eyes of the Countess.

“ For the love of goodness, Mr. Massingberd, what put it into your head to invite Lord Greville to stay and dine with us ?” cried his wife, as soon as the swing gate had closed after their horses. “ Lord Greville, of Greville Abbey, sitting down to our roast mutton—”

“ With his vulgar agent and our two stupid selves !—Out with it, my dear, for fear it should choke you !”—interrupted the squire. “ What made me ask him ?—why, because I’m pretty certain the young fellow would have been glad enough to come. Do you suppose he wouldn’t rather pass the evening in talking about country matters and field-sports, with Dowdeswell and me, than sit watching his mother snip ends of worsted yonder at Greville Abbey ?—Dowdeswell told me just now it was the lad’s own proposal to drop in here ; and when I saw how plaguy black the lady of your own condition of life looked at finding her son paying a neighbourly visit without her knowledge, egad I thought it would be a good lesson for her to

keep him till night,—and send him home with his courage topped by a bottle of the old Madeira his father used to be so fond of!”—

“If you wish to ask him to dine with you, why not do it in a proper way?”

“There is always a proper time, my dear, for doing things in a proper way,—and a proper time for doing them in an improper way.—Besides, Madam Semiramis would easily find means to circumvent a dinner at Hill Hall, at a week’s notice; while to-day, though it would have made her as mad as Bedlam had the young man stayed with us, she could no more have prevented it than flown. However, I have a shrewd notion this tyranny will shortly be overpast. Unless I’m much mistaken, I discern a character about young Greville’s mouth and eyebrows, such as I never saw there till to-day. Cymon has found his Iphigenia; and between them, if they don’t contrive to oust the dowager—well, well!—I beg your pardon for speaking such plain English!—If you wont

shrug your shoulders, I will say it in a handsomer manner;—if they do not contrive to marry, —settle at Greville Abbey,—and *unsettle* the lady of your own condition of life, *I am under an erroneous impression*. There !—there's a touch of Lord Brooks for you, my dear ;—and you know you have always had a sneaking kindness for the peerage !”

CHAPTER XI.

Chang'd, chang'd ! I feel that thou art chang'd ;
 Though change thou dost deny !—
I feel it as the storm is felt
 Ere seen upon the sky.—
Thy looks are cold,—thy voice hath lost
 Its low peculiar tone,—
Till now, I never knew how much
 I felt thou wert my own.

LADY STEPNEY.

LORD GREVILLE'S solitary ride home, after parting with Dowdeswell at the gate of his modest habitation on the outskirts of the domain, was far from propitious to the maintenance of his filial subordination. He had never seen his mother to such disadvantage as during her visit

to Hill Hall. With the Massingberds, her tone was cold and haughty, — with himself, almost imperious ; her former grace and suavity seemed to have forsaken her.

Or was it that the spell of fascination was broken by her confession of fraud,—of imposture ? — Since the preceding night, she seemed changed as by the wand of an enchanter. She was grown older, paler, severer. Either remorse had kept her sleepless, or the scales had fallen from the eyes of her son.

When they met at dinner, Greville was still more struck by the alteration. But though touched by her air of indisposition, it was still with the feeling of superiority arising from conscious rectitude. As she sat facing him, cold and silent, he strove to entertain her with details of all he had seen and heard at Squeamington and on his tour of inspection. But in proportion as Lady Greville noticed his tone of self-possession, her own became more wavering. She saw that her son had ascended his throne,—

the throne of his own mind,—and that she must henceforth humble herself in his presence.

It was now *her* turn to recede. If the Earl appeared in a new character, his mother was scarcely less metamorphosed. She wished to temporize,—she would gladly have avoided the impending explanation.—When the newspapers, forwarded by the morning coach, were placed on the dessert-table, instead of allowing them to lie in their covers as was usually the case with one who cared too much for her own affairs to interest herself deeply in those of the world, she requested Hugo to read aloud the leading article from the Times,—the news from Egypt,—China, — Lloyd's,— and would have condescended to the casualties of the railroads and Serpentine river, but that her motive for desiring to supersede conversation between them, must have been too apparent. It was indeed a relief when the time expired, which, according to the ceremonious formalities of the house, entitled her to quit the dining-room.

It happened to be one of those genial nights in which a full moon sometimes renews, at the beginning of autumn, the warmth of summer;—the effulgent August moon, termed by the French *la lune des vendanges*, and often used as daylight by the industrious Flemish, to secure their second hay-harvest.

Attracted by the balmy atmosphere that saluted him through the open windows of the great hall, after quitting the heated dining-room, Greville stepped out beneath the gothic portico, whose stone vases were filled with flowering orange trees, to luxuriate in the delicious fragrance and tranquil moonlight ; and by degrees, was tempted to prolong his walk, till he found himself strolling through the shrubberies at some distance from the house.

In another moment, he was startled by the sight of an advancing figure,—a female figure,—the figure of his mother !—

What business had she there at such a time ?

It had been nothing extraordinary for any other woman to be found enjoying a delicious night in a delicious garden, secure from danger or intrusion. But the Countess was so thoroughly a creature of habit, and it was so completely *out* of her habit to exert herself for her own enjoyment, that Greville felt almost as much overawed as if one of the marble statues in the hall had descended from its pedestal to wander forth and meet him by the way !

Each would gladly have avoided the other, had it been possible. But there was nothing for it but to meet and continue their walk together ; taking refuge in generalities about “ a second summer,—finer than at midsummer,” enlivened with the usual prediction that “ it would be a wonderful season for the hop-growers.”—With all their mutual discontents, it was impossible not to enjoy the exquisite charm of such a scene and such an hour.

“ We should have been glad of such a night

as this a fortnight ago, for Lady Mary Carmichael's breakfast," observed Greville, by way of general conversation. "Nothing could be better imagined than the fête she had prepared; but thanks to the variabilities of our climate, a bitter evening interfered with our projects. The green lamps intended to represent glow-worms seemed hung among icicles; while those who ventured on the water, were taxed with an intention of attempting the North Western passage!—Though the middle of July, it was far colder than the night you may recollect in May, at the Hotel de St. Pierre."

Lady Greville *did* recollect; she only wished she could have forgotten! For the coolness with which her son referred to the circumstance, convinced her that nothing now would daunt him from his purpose. So instant indeed was her conviction that, without further preliminary, she demanded—"You persist, then, in going to Normandy?"

“You heard me say so to old Massingberd this morning.”

“In that case, I have only one further request to make !” she continued, dropping her son’s arm, which she had accepted on meeting him ; “that you allow Dowdeswell to read to you to-morrow (when he will meet you here at any hour you may appoint) those clauses of your father’s will referring to the restrictions upon your minority.”

“I will meet Dowdeswell, or any one else you choose, my dear mother,” replied the Earl. “But let me forewarn you, in the first instance, that nothing they can say to me,—nothing contained in my father’s will,—will in the slightest degree influence my conduct. For some time to come, I have no power over my property.—I know it,—I do not complain,—for complaint were useless. But no legal document can have deprived me of the use of my senses,—of my faculties,—of my right to feel and act as may become a man. If you wish me to retain

the repute and honour of one in the eyes of the world, do not attempt to reduce me to utter insignificance, by too arbitrary an exercise of the authority with which you are invested by the unlucky confidence of my father."

"Hugo, you know not of what you are talking!"—cried the Countess, in a tone of increasing bitterness. "It is to preserve your repute and honour in the eyes of the world, that I persist in the exercise of my rights. In all other things, your will shall be my law;—but I repeat that the marriage you contemplate is impossible."

"Impossible is a woman's word!"—cried the Earl, with indignant impetuosity. "To a strong mind and willing heart, nothing is impossible! But, in this instance, there is not even a difficulty to surmount!"

"Do you account for nothing difference of religion?"—demanded the Countess, in a faltering voice.

"I am no bigot," replied Greville. "So my

wife be a conscientious Catholic, the difference of creed between us is of small account. Nay, mother, I have too often heard you express a similar opinion, and revered your Christian spirit of toleration, to fear that the Catholicism of Mademoiselle de Nangis should constitute any serious objection in your eyes."

Lady Greville was silent. On such a point, she felt that hypocrisy were a crime of double magnitude.

"Let me hope, therefore," continued the Earl, encouraged by her silence; "let me earnestly hope that the merits of Eugénie—"

"No merits of hers,—no strength of attachment on your part,—would sway me from my purpose!"—cried Lady Greville. "Oh! that I dared trust you—that I dared confide in you!"—she continued, with a sudden and frantic change of tone that seemed to freeze the blood within the veins of her son. "You call me tyrant,—you think me unjust,—capricious!—I,—who

through every vicissitude of my miserable life, have studied nothing but your welfare—”

“Vicissitude,—miserable !”—reiterated Greville, in utter amazement.

“Consider,” resumed the Countess, not heeding his interruption, “consider what I risk by this bold opposition to your will !—I lose everything, Hugo ; for your love—your confidence—are all that is dearest to me on earth !—Tell me, is it decreed,—can it really be,—that the mother who for twenty wretched years has lived in you and for you, must be cast aside to avenge a baffled whim, a mere caprice,—yes, caprice ; for at this moment, you are the sport of wavering affections ; while *mine*,—a love passing the love of women,—is fixed with unvarying steadiness upon my child !”—

“Why,—why,—have you not always addressed me thus !” cried Greville, taking her unresisting hand, and drawing it within his arm.

“I know,” resumed the Countess, in a still

more broken voice, “that there must have been moments in your young life, when my authority was a heavy burden. Long have I dreaded the moment when the consciousness of manhood would bring the consciousness of dependence. For years, I tried to isolate you from companionship likely to quicken your discovery of the vexatiousness of such a yoke—”

“Mother—”

“Nay ! I am fully aware that your early affection for me was such as to prevent your being accosted with sarcasms upon the peculiarities of our relative position.—I knew it,—I felt it,—and loved you a thousand-fold the more for the devotedness of your filial affection !—But this authority, Hugo, to *you* so insupportable, was not of my seeking,—was imposed upon me,—imposed with terrible restrictions,—and at an age when I scarcely understood the weight of the obligations I was contracting. If at this moment I could fling it aside,—if at any moment since you acquired the stature and understand-

ing of a man, I could have done so, leaving you the immunities and privileges of your class, trust me, I had not hesitated ;—*trust me*. But why do I talk thus wildly !—I,—hitherto so guarded, so circumspect, am allowing myself—” she paused. A deep silence ensued, which Lord Greville dared not interrupt ; for, as well as their footsteps echoing in the still moonlight would allow, he fancied that suppressed sobs were quickening the respiration of his mother.

“ I know,” cried she at length, gasping for breath when she found her arm compassionately pressed by her son. “ I know that the world has upbraided me as interested,—as despotic,—as cold,—as haughty !—By our neighbours here, by a still wider circle elsewhere, you have been painted as a victim, I as a tyrant—

a dowager

Long withering out a young man’s revenue !

I have borne this ! Indifferent to the opinion of the world,—loving you and you only,—I

submitted to all imputations rather than hazard an injury to the interests of my son. But since last night, Hugo, I have experienced a trial for which I had never prepared myself;—your scorn,—your contempt. The withering expression of your lip when I owned that I had stooped to a deception in order to bring you back from Paris, cut me to the soul;—from that moment, your look has not been absent from my thoughts.”

“Reflect,” said Greville, in a low agitated voice, “reflect, dearest mother, on my long reliance upon your integrity,—upon your own lessons of honour and veracity.—If for years I revered your word as that of a being belonging to a higher sphere—”

“You torture me beyond your power of comprehension !” cried the agitated Lady Greville. “My life has been a tissue of falsehoods ! — towards the world, — towards *you*, my nearest and dearest,—a tissue of falsehoods ! — But not of my own weaving,

Hugo. I have been a slave to the impositions of others."

Convinced that his mother's reason was forsaking her, and that his sudden resistance must be the origin of her bewilderment, Greville could scarcely subdue his emotion so far as to exercise what he conceived the necessary control over his unfortunate companion. At a little distance, on a green nook of lawn opening from the shrubberies to command a view of the distant country, stood an alcove, towards which he hurried her, in order to obtain time for the concentration of his faculties.

"Compose yourself, dearest mother,—compose yourself,"—said he, in the soothing voice in which passionate children are addressed, while placing her on the rustic bench and taking a seat by her side.

"No, Hugo,—I am not losing my senses," replied the Countess, at once detecting the nature of his anxiety. "I am only too much myself,—only too rational.—I do not wonder,

my poor son, at your alarm. After viewing for years the specious mask under which I have forced myself to conceal the terrors of an anxious heart, I need not be surprised to find you startled by even an ordinary demonstration of feeling,—far more by the outbursts of my overcharged heart !”

“ Mother, mother !—if, indeed, these emotions be not the result of delusion of mind,” cried Greville, unable to contain himself, “ I beseech you, do not torture me by such mysterious allusions. In God’s name, what is it you dread,—what is it that torments you thus,—what is the evil influence that has embittered a life so surrounded with the prosperities of this world ?—You cannot intend to mock me by thus exciting my curiosity !—No ; you mean to vouchsafe me ample explanations !—Speak, mother !—who is your enemy ?—where lies your danger ?”—

“ No one is my enemy, I trust,” replied Lady

Greville, in a calmer voice. “The danger, Hugo, is for yourself. Were I alone threatened, you had not seen me thus excited !”

“Danger—to *me* ?—I have injured no one, —I have offended no one,”—said the Earl, still more and more astonished. “Be more explicit, I entreat you—”

“I dare not,—I cannot !”—interrupted his mother. “Though I perceive the impossibility of excluding you longer from my confidence, I find it equally impossible to deposit in *your* bosom the secret which to my own has proved a deep and withering curse !”

“Not confide in me ?” cried Greville. “Have you no trust in my discretion,—in my honour?—”

“In both ;—and yet — tell me !” cried Lady Greville, turning suddenly towards her son with streaming eyes and uplifted hands ; “have you no presentiment,—no suspicion ?”—

“None,—on my conscientious word, *none* !” replied the Earl, solemnly. “You are speaking

riddles to me. And but for the sad earnestness of your countenance, I should fancy you sporting with my credulity."

"You will not hesitate, then, to afford me your word that no earthly or unearthly consideration shall prevail upon you to divulge, to any mortal breathing, what you force me to disclose?"

"A secret confided in trust to me by my mother?"—cried Greville, agitated almost beyond the power of utterance. "Surely there can be no need for such a pledge!"—

"Still less, then, to withhold it!"

"I do not withhold it. I promise, by all that is most sacred upon earth, that no temptation shall induce me to reveal one syllable of the communication you seem disposed to make me!—Only one word!—If it involve a confession of guilt such as it would be death for a son to gather from the lips of his mother, pity me,—spare me,—or at least give me time to submit myself to so agonizing an infliction!"

“No, Hugo—no, my darling son,—my idolized son !”—cried Lady Greville, flinging her arms wildly round his neck, and pressing her lips to his cold cheek. “On that ground, you have nothing to dread. I am all that you have ever thought me, when you thought best of me.—Nay, I am more ;—for when I passed for cold and arbitrary, I was but subduing my feelings, I was but assuming an authority indispensable to the welfare of my child. *I* was to be pitied then, Hugo ! —But it is you,—*you*, my noble, my injured boy who are to be pitied now ; for though still my son,—still beloved,—still good, still wise,—”

“Mother !”—

“Forgive me for delaying the fatal word—”

“Oh ! mother, mother !”—

“Though all this, my child,—all this, and more,—you are an outcast,—illegitimate,—robbed of your birthright on the very threshold of life !”—

It did not surprise Lady Greville that no answer was conceded to this passionate invocation. It did not surprise her that, pale, breathless, gasping as for life, poor Greville sat reclined by her side, praying the sky above his head to fall and overwhelm him.

“ Yet I am not to blame,” cried she, suddenly apprehending that such a declaration might again involve her in a charge of criminality. “ No less a victim than yourself, the marriage vow which rendered me to the eyes of the world a Countess, was valid in my own. I knew of no impediment. How was I to suppose that a man of honour, a peer of the realm, would venture to approach a woman of his own high condition with proposals that might expose himself to the rigour of the offended laws of his country, and *her* to years of shame and remorse?—Shall I tell it you word by word,—my poor boy?—shall I disclose to you step by step the iniquities to which we fell a sacrifice?”—

“ I have not strength or courage to bear

it *now!*" murmured Greville, starting up, as if stung by some noisome reptile. "The blow has struck home. I feel it as you must have expected,—as you perhaps intended.—But do not wantonly sport with the weapon still rankling in the wound." He stood for a moment firm and erect in the moonlight, wiping the cold dew from his forehead, and struggling to recover some show of manly composure. But it would not do. Again he sank into his seat, and covering his face with his hands, burst into an agony of tears.

At the close of some minutes undisturbed indulgence of his grief, he whispered, "Yes, you are right.—Better I should know the worst at once.—Say on, mother;—how was it that this evil fell upon us, which you seem to feel more bitterly for me than for yourself?"—

His hand was clasped between those of the Countess, ere she found utterance for the following explanations:—

"I need not allude to my origin. You have

seen in our metropolitan church, Hugo, the monument voted by parliament to my gallant father who fell at Valenciennes; and are aware that the long-enduring devotion to his memory of my mother, Lady Margaret For-dyce, necessitated the completion of my education in strict retirement. Towards the widow and only child of its faithful servant, government was as liberal as a multitude of similar claims, even at the commencement of a war that threatened to be long and disastrous, would admit. Our pension, and the small fortune inherited by my father as younger son of a Scottish earl, scarcely, however, enabled us to maintain the appearance due to our station in society; till apartments were assigned us in Hampton Court Palace, by the especial interference of the kind old King, the personal friend of my father.

“So passed my early days. I was a feeble child;—feeble by nature,—feeble through the excessive watchfulness awaiting a widow’s only

child. Scarcely an hour of the day or night did I quit my mother's presence. My education was her work,—limited, alas! by the contracted bounds at that period assigned to the accomplishments of women of noble birth. But she taught me something better than superficial acquirements;—both by precept and example she taught me the humble virtue of patience. She was herself the slave of narrow circumstances, and I was hers; for till I was a woman, I never knew what it was to have expressed a will. Such was then the form of English society.—It has altered strangely since,—another generation must decide whether it have altered for the better.

“ I attained to womanhood, my dear Hugo, without the consciousness of a passion or an ambition. The grand object of my poor mother's life was the prudent application of her slender income; and the day which caused no unusual excess of expenditure appeared a day well spent. When alone together, her talk was

ever of economy,—of domestic management. There was nothing expansive in her mind. One of a numerous and ill-provided family, it was thus she had been reared ; how could she do otherwise than bestow a similar cast of mind upon the sharer of her scanty fortunes ?—

“It was the great event of our year, when, by careful management, we were enabled to exchange the monotony of Hampton Court for a few weeks by the seaside in autumn, at some minor bathing place, such as Broadstairs or Worthing. The gaieties of London were, of course, beyond our sphere.—They were even a forbidden theme between my mother and myself. For the poor to dwell on the enjoyments of the rich, is almost a crime ; and Lady Margaret was careful to point out to me that a breach of the ninth commandment by such as ourselves, equals the infringement of the eighth, by those who do lack and suffer hunger.

“In spite, however, of her wise admonitions, I *was* envious of the prosperity of others. At

Hampton Court, I was ever in contact with persons of her own condition in life, who enjoyed, without restraint, the luxuries I felt to be her due:—which, as she advanced in life, became almost necessities,—and which I saw no prospect of administering to her enjoyment. My young life became embittered by the thought. For myself, I had never looked forward,—for *her* I became far-sighted. The only hope that presented itself to my imagination, was a marriage enabling me to afford a home to her declining years;—a home for which she need not ascend such wearisome flights of stairs,—and wherein delicate food and abundant fuel would not be grudged by her conscientious calculations.

“ But, alas! this hope was all but chimeric. I was no beauty,—I possessed no showy accomplishments,—I had not even the chance of other girls thrust into the glittering pageant of fashionable life by the speculation of reckless parents. Judge, therefore, how great my joy when, one

autumn at Tonbridge Wells, the rich Earl of Greville, prepossessed by the very simplicity of manners and mind which I had supposed fatal to my attractions, became a suitor for my hand! He was more than twenty years my senior, indeed ;—an invalid,—grave,—reserved ;—yet there was something in his calm urbanity more consonant with my character and habits of life, than the vivacity of younger men.

“Even had I been less disposed to find or fancy merits in the first human being who had gratified my vanity by a declaration of attachment, the generous warmth with which he made it a condition of our marriage that my mother should become our inmate for the remainder of her days, would have produced a strong impression on my heart. Men are not fond of a mother-in-law planted everlastingly by their fireside, in judgment upon their actions ; and often, when I had avowed to my mother my projects for such a happy close of her existence, she used to entreat me never to

breathe, in presence of any other human being, an intention fatal to my establishment in life.

“ Lord Greville, however, forestalled my wishes. It was he who, despising the idea of domestic jealousies, insisted that Lady Margaret should occupy in his house the place which, had she survived, he would have assigned to his own mother.

“ With such a lover, Hugo, judge whether we were disposed to caution!—We were two isolated women. Lady Margaret knew nothing of business beyond the forms necessary for the receipt of her pension; and the Earl of Greville, so open-handed, so noble-minded, who rejected all mention of fortune on my part, yet provided for me more liberally than had been done for the Countess who brought the richest dowry into the family, was accepted without reserve, without condition.

“ I was very happy. It becomes me not now to speak of your father,—*not now*,—when you

are smarting under the sense of injury caused by his errors. Yet, amid all your sorrow, my dearest son, be justice done to the memory of the dead !—A man more kindly-hearted, more sensitive to the welfare of others than the late Earl, never yet trod the earth. His heart was softness itself.—He was mild, humane, forbearing.—He loved much,—yea, all the creatures of God, for the sake of Him who gave them being. Do not undervalue this precious gift,—the surest attribute of a heavenly nature !—Superiority of mind is a vulgar endowment compared with that refinement of charity which would wipe all tears from all faces ; and which, in spite of rank and station, responds to the ‘ touch of nature making the whole world kin.’—

“ Lord Greville was too infirm of health to admit of entering much into the world. We settled, as he had always projected, at the Abbey. By degrees, the little society we received there, became less ;—by degrees, nothing. We lived alone. Yet I was more than content.

Neither my mother nor myself had any taste for the tumults of life. My garden, my village, my fireside occupations, filled up the routine of my days ;—till that crowning event—that event more instinct with joy than it is in the heart of man to conceive,—the birth of my child—*my son* ! The tenants talked of him as the heir ;—my poor mother never called him otherwise than Lord Rowsleigh — ‘ my grandson, the young Lord Rowsleigh.’ Your father and myself, as with tearful eyes we pressed each other’s hands over your cradle, called you our own—our only ;—and the bliss that was in that name and that sympathy, Hugo, is beyond the reach of words !—

“ It seemed strange to *me*, indeed, with whom that triumphant feeling was paramount, that it should not suffice to restore health and joyfulness to my husband.—Yet even when you grew old enough to recognise and repay his caresses, Lord Greville remained sad and sickly. I often surprised him in solitary reflection ; sometimes, in tears. Yet such is the deference involuntarily tes-

tified by the healthy towards the depression of an habitual invalid, that I never referred to the cause of these secret afflictions. I have since recollected that he received letters, which, in spite of the confidence existing between us, he did not offer to communicate. Like myself, he was an only child; family secrets had consequently no share in his reserve. If I noticed it at the time, however, it was only to lament that the unexplained correspondence invariably produced an increase of indisposition and despondency.

“The world, meanwhile, took little heed of what was passing at Greville Abbey. We were despised, I fancy, by the connexions of the two families, as obscure, domestic people, unworthy the prosperities heaped upon us by Providence. Strangers occupied the old apartments at Hampton Court. My mother had resigned her pension; and we were now a single family — three generations dwelling united under one happy

roof. It seemed as if no evil, no sorrow could come near us—save the casualties which not even palace gates avail to shut out!

“Thus it was with us, Hugo;—and I linger on the relation,—for then was the crowning season of my earthly comfort!—

“One day—I had risen with the same thoughtless, fearless elation of spirit that brightened every morning of my prosperous life;—I had given thanks to God, as usual, for a day of coming happiness;—I had, as usual, blessed my lovely child, and received the daily blessing of my mother;—when, on proceeding to Lord Greville’s dressing-room to inquire after his health, which had struck me, the preceding day, as more impaired than usual, I found him extended almost lifeless on the sofa—a letter, half crushed, within his clenched hand!—

“My first impulse was to ring for help; but a feeble gesture from my husband restrained the movement.

“‘I must have no help but yours,’ said he, ‘for in no other friend can I put my trust.’

“Then, clinging to my hands, he pressed them to his lips with such convulsive fervour, that I thought, (as you, my poor boy, appeared to fear just now for your mother,) that reason was deserting him.

“‘You have no other friend in whom you trust,’ said I, hoping to soothe his excited feelings, ‘because your fond partiality has led you to content yourself with the society of your fireside. Friends, dear Greville, troops of friends, you might have at will!’

“‘None to whom I dare confide the secret I would fain confide to *you*,’ he replied, in fluttering accents. ‘None to whom I dare reveal my shame,—my danger,—as I am about to tell it to my wife: — my wife, the partner of my disgrace, — my wife, whom I have steeped in infamy!’—

“My utmost endeavours were now exerted to tranquillize his agitation. I dared not give

way to my own.—I dared not avow the interest—the vivid interest—excited by these dreadful denunciations. The physicians had too often assured me that the continuance of my husband's life depended on his security from all excessive emotion!—

“ ‘ You will not ask what fearful event has agitated me thus!’ said he. ‘ You are wise! The knowledge must ever come too soon;—too soon for *you*—so young, so good, so pure, so blameless, — yet fated to share with myself the penalty of guilt.—Oh! Mary, Mary!—could we but bear it alone!—That there were none but ourselves to wither under the decree!’ ”

“ ‘ My child!’—cried I, unable at this allusion to control one moment longer the terrors of my soul. ‘ Speak, Greville,—if you would have me preserve my reason.’ ”

“ It was not, however, till after the lapse of many hours—many hours of soothing and solitude—that I wrung from him the story of my wrongs. I was not his wife,—*you*, not his son;

for in the eye of the law no human consanguinity attaches to the illegitimate !

“ Like yourself, beloved Hugo, your father was an only child ;—the son of a light-hearted libertine, carried off by dissipation in the flower of his days, after committing the heir of his name to the guardianship of one of his frivolous associates—a man of wit and pleasure about town. Under such authority, Lord Greville had found little difficulty in tracing plans for his own education. There wanted still some months to the attainment of his majority when he quitted Oxford ; and instead of passing them in prudent retirement at Greville Abbey, he chose to proceed to Paris, on pretence of accomplishing himself in the lighter branches of what was then esteemed a polite education.

“ All the lesson he learnt there, however, was repentance—deep and lasting repentance ! Intemperance that planted the germ of future infirmity,—dissipation, engaging him in connexions that made him what he was, and left us

what we are—such, such were the results of his ill-starred expedition !—

“ France was on the eve of the great Revolution that fixed the eyes of all Europe upon its enormities ; and the disorganized state of society consequent upon such a crisis, produced a degree of moral recklessness, the fruitful parent of crime. Orgies of the wildest nature were the order of the day. Men’s passions and faculties were in a perpetual state of excitement. Slight as were the hints afforded to me by your father of the nature of his pleasures, they are such as I dare not record in presence of his son. One admission, however, is inevitable. The partner of his follies,—the woman to whom, in the midst of all this ferment of dissipation, he fancied himself attached,—was the wife of another.

“ Highly born and nobly married, her conduct was such as, even in the general depravation then prevailing, to produce her rejection from society.

“ The penalty of noble birth still, however, impended over her ; and some weeks ere the guillotine rendered her a widow, she emigrated to Germany, having secured the rash and inexperienced Greville as the partner of her flight. Under an assumed name, they lived together at Nuremberg as man and wife ;—and it was rather an act of infatuation on your father’s part than of compunction on her own, which induced them, on receiving tidings of the execution of her husband, to consolidate their union by legitimate ties. Irritated by the rivalship of a young Hessian officer of noble extraction, and eager to secure to himself the affections of one of the most worthless of her sex, Greville made her a hasty offer of his hand. Within a few days after the attainment of his majority, the ceremony was performed between them, by a minister of the Protestant church, a refugee like themselves, and like themselves involved in a career of libertinism and shame !

“ As if to lose no time in bringing home to the infatuated man the rashness of his folly, her sins against this second tie of wedlock were even more flagrant than against the first!—A duel was the result ; in which your father inflicted a severe wound upon the young Hessian who had superseded him in her smiles. Without hesitation, she immediately quitted his protection ; deriding his claims upon her as untenable, and assuming the name and the title of the object of her new attachment.

“ Overpowered with shame at his own folly, Lord Greville’s sole consolation lay in her disavowal of their marriage. He determined to quit Nuremburg ; trusting that all would be buried in oblivion within the walls of the city wherein he was known only by the assumed name conferred by the American passports with which he and his companion escaped from France.

“ It was a stirring epoch.—The reign of

terror was not yet at an end; and throughout Europe, wars and rumours of wars distorted the fair face of society.—On Lord Greville's arrival in England, he became immediately involved in the settlement of the affairs of his minority.—His estate was encumbered,—his health impaired.—He became a recluse,—a valetudinarian,—a hypochondriac;—thankful only that the wretched woman to whom he had thus rashly devoted himself, had so quickly burst asunder the ties created in a moment of intoxication by the flightiness of boyhood.

“Humiliated by the disgrace in which he had involved himself, Greville naturally abstained from allusion to his foreign connexions. The English had fled the Continent ere he visited Germany. There were none to betray him—none to deride him.—After the lapse of a year, he began to question the reality of the scenes in which he had played so poor a part; after the lapse of many, almost forgot their very existence. Not a syllable reached him from

Germany,—not a syllable from France.—There was every probability that this miserable woman had terminated her career of folly in the grave. So complete was his conviction of this, that disgust for the marriage-state consequent upon his own experience, alone prevented his seeking another wife. He believed himself free ; and when our accidental acquaintance inspired him with one of those sudden passions fated to control a human destiny, he was not a moment deterred from offering me his hand by scruples connected with the past.

“ ‘ Nay, long after our union,’ said he, when these afflicting explanations eventually took place between us,—‘ long after our union, dearest Mary, if I recoiled from reference to my previous marriage, it was less from apprehension of its interference with your rights, than because I would not assail the ears of one so pure—so spotless,—with a tale of vice and crime in which I was an actor.

“ ‘ It was not,’ continued he, ‘ till the very

eve of the birth of my son, that the fatal truth became known to me :—the Countess lived,—and my child was disinherited, as it were, on the threshold of life,—a victim ere he saw the light !—The Continent, so long closed by the seals of war and usurpation, was at length opened ; and among others who profited by the return of peace to revisit their native country, was Blair,—the minister by whom my ill-starred union had been consecrated. He was a man of blasted character,—of disreputable pursuits.—To *him* the possession of my secret was a mine of wealth ; for he knew that I would rather forfeit the moiety of my fortune than that she who dwelt in my bosom,—my trusting, my deceived Mary, should be precipitated to the dust by tidings of the survival of my wife.

“ ‘ On the terrors which beset my mind, and which I had not the power to conceal from this man, did he found a system of villanous extortion. It was in vain I bought his silence,—his absence !—Still he returned,—still he

threatened. For what is to render binding a compact with one devoid of principle, who knows that by a single word he can destroy the happiness and honour of an opulent family!

“ ‘ My life became a life of torment. Fear was perpetually upon my soul;—embittering my food,—disturbing my rest. Half the sufferings you ascribed to indisposition arose from the moral night-mare of a tortured mind. I became morose,—inconsistent,—reserved.—I no longer dared find myself alone with you. Ever on the eve of exposure, dreading from hour to hour that you might learn to hate me,—to regard me as an enemy,—I felt that every appeal to your tenderness, every acceptance of kindness at your hands, was an act of treachery.

“ ‘ And now, Mary, all this is forced out of the depths of my soul, only because such poor justice as I may still render you—is at length at my disposal. This woman, this clinging, cleaving curse of my existence, is no more;—and I have to ask you again, as I asked you four years

ago, will you be my wife?—Oh, that I could say to our dear, unhappy child, be my lawful heir,—be my successor!—*That* blessing is denied me!—I can only say, be my heir so long as no insidious enemy interferes to canvass your claims!’

“ ‘ You desire that a new ceremony,—a real ceremony,—a valid ceremony,—should be performed between us?’ said I, shuddering with a sense of my griefs, yet not daring to increase what I knew must be the anguish of his soul, by adverting to the injuries of my child. ‘ To what end?—for what purpose?—that I,—your concubine,—your mistress,—may become your lawful wife?—Alas! God knows my innocence of this offence.—In the eyes of Heaven, I am yours by the most sacred of ties!—Wherefore draw upon ourselves the attention of the world by so strange a measure!’

“ I was desperate, Hugo. The earth seemed to have receded from my feet. I knew not to

what to trust, — to whom to confide myself. There was nothing true in my position—nothing real in the fabric of happiness and splendour wherein my soul had made its habitation !

“ But why torture you, my poor boy, by the recapitulation of my feelings, when you are only too well able to estimate them by the bitterness of your own ! It is only to the facts of the case I ought to direct your attention. Suffice it that, conquered by your father’s entreaties, I consented to accompany him to town, and in an obscure parish of the metropolis become legitimately his wife. Our great object was to prevent suspicion from entering the mind of my mother. At her age, and with her views and principles, a revelation of the grievous truth would have been fatal.

“ We succeeded in the concealment of our measures. No mortal living, save him by whose persevering cupidity my husband’s soul had been so tortured, entertained the smallest idea of

the truth. But the happiness of my life was gone. Not alone the injury entailed upon my child,—not alone the mortification of being subject to the authority of the wretch in possession of our secret,—not alone the anguish of standing as a deceiver in presence of my mother, in presence of my God, — weighed insupportably upon my spirits;—but I had lost all trust in him to whom I had been devoted, heart and soul,—for better for worse, — to dwell with him in this world, in sickness and in health, till we slept together finally in the dust.—He had deceived me.—When my young heart expanded to him, as to its Maker, *he* had maintained reserves, — *he* had uttered specious falsehoods, — he had deceived—betrayed—”

“Mother!” interrupted Lord Greville, “reflect upon your recent avowal that he was guiltless of offence against any living thing—that he believed in the invalidity of his rash marriage—”

“Then why not confide it to me?”—interrupted Lady Greville in her turn. “Where

there is deceit, Hugo, there is consciousness of guilt. I own it,—perhaps to my shame,—*surely* to my shame since even you, my son, condemn me,—that from the hour of my husband's confession I never loved him again with the deferential tenderness of a wife. An evil thought—an evil feeling had interposed betwixt him and me.

“Instinct soon admonished him that it was no longer with us as before; that he had lost his hold on the affections so thoroughly his own; and his spirit sank oppressed under the consciousness. He felt that all was over for him in this world; and as if to punish me for my injustice rather than to conciliate my kinder interpretation, devoted the last months of his life to securing, by every means in his power, my worldly prosperity. His princely fortune was unentailed,—a very small portion of the family estates being hereditary with the title. He consequently so worded his will that, in the event of any unforeseen circumstance bringing to light

the unlawful nature of your claims, his property might still descend to his injured child.

“Satisfied, moreover, that the misfortunes of his life were owing to the premature enjoyment of his independence, he prolonged your minority, assigning to the hands of your mother an authority which I trust she has not abused.

“It was not long after the execution of a double will, and deeds carefully prepared and executed by his own hand, that your poor father experienced a fatal attack. Great were his sufferings—imminent his danger;—and it was in one of those crises of torture, when his existence from moment to moment appeared to hang upon the tranquillization of his mind, that I granted him the sacred promise he had so often attempted to extort from me, never to let my secret escape my lips to any mortal breathing, save my son;—never even to my son, till on the eve of accomplishing his majority, and under circumstances to render the revelation indispensable to his welfare.

“ From the time of obtaining this solemn pledge, his mind seemed lightened of its cares. But he was a doomed man. He had only a few months to live. Thanks to his confidence in my word, those months were months of piety and peace.

“ But by this exaction, he had deprived me of my last hope !—All I desired was to escape from the mazes of deception in which I found myself reluctantly involved ; to retire from the pomps of life, with the fair boy who, if not a peer of the realm, had the noblest blood of England flowing in his veins ; to make a friend, a confidant of my child !—But this solace was denied me. When my poor Greville expired, all that remained for me was to bear unassisted the burden of falsehood imposed upon me. Till then, I had never rightly understand the misery of my position ; or the attachment which, in spite of all, had bound me to the dead. For now commenced the real season of my atonement.

“ I felt, — I was conscious of feeling, — an hourly deterioration of my nature. Hypocrisy, like a corrupting rust, ate into the very texture of my mind.—Habitual dissimulation seemed to crush all the better impulses of my bosom. Afraid of being tempted to betray my trust, I laboured to repress every generous emotion that might elevate me above the vile cause to which I was devoted. I receded from society. —I surrounded myself with instruments, who might assist me in the task of isolating my son from too free a communication with the world. Dreading above all things to provoke your spirit of inquiry into the mysteries surrounding us, I not only did not dare cultivate for myself the joys of friendship, but was forced to deny to my boy the sweet comfort of having a friend!—I seemed a tyrant,—a despot ; while myself the abject slave of circumstances which I despised!—

“ It was only by imposing upon myself a wearisome routine of conduct,—a form of life,—

form even of countenance,—that I could manage to subdue my nature to the level I desired. I became a factitious being. The only joy allowed me was the idolization of my boy ;—and *who* can tell,—who by any power of language could succeed in depicting, the force of that all-engrossing attachment !—My poor old mother often reproved me ;—reproved me even upon the deathbed, from whose pillow I was labouring to extract the thorns,—with the overweening nature of my love for him who had superseded her in my affections !—

“ But I was repaid, beloved child, by your attachment. You grew to be all I could desire,—all I had prayed for ;—and soon, my anxieties became concentrated in the task of securing the stability of your destinies. The memory of your father’s misfortunes was strong upon me. I dreaded the influence of the dissolute. I dreaded the result of wild connexions. If in after days my authority appear to have been too absolutely exercised, reflect upon all I

had to apprehend from your assumption of an independence which might lead to excesses similar to his own; or to the discovery of the evil consequences exemplified in your position !”

“ Still, dearest mother,” remonstrated Greville, in a mild but determined voice, “ I cannot perceive the motive of your especial enmity towards Eugénie and her sister.”

“ Her sister, in the first instance, because I dreaded from *her* the same temptations which had assailed your father. But your attachment to Mademoiselle de Nangis threatened a still darker danger. By the laws of France, Hugo, it is indispensable to the validity of wedlock, that the marriage certificates of the parents of both parties should be produced, as well as the certificates of their birth. To *you*, my son, it is consequently interdicted to wed with a foreigner.”

“ Not so, mother !”—replied Greville, labouring to rally his spirits from the deep despon-

dency into which he had sunk during the narrative of his mother. “You cannot suppose that I,—a man,—a man of honour,—will connive in the imposture to which I have been made an unwilling party. It is my intention—”

“It is *not* your intention to do aught that would bring the grey hairs of your mother with sorrow to the grave!”—cried Lady Greville, with deep emotion. “No; though your own voice told me so, I would not believe it!—You *could* not add that crowning misery to the destiny of a woman so sinned against as I have been;—a woman whom confidence in your affection has enabled to bear up against twenty years of bitterness;—a woman who has—”

“You say rightly!—I *could* not!”—interrupted Greville. “It is *I*, who, in this as in all else, must become the sacrifice. It is *my* nature that must be henceforward deteriorated by the cherishing of my hypocrisy,—it is I who must be weighed down by bearing about the consciousness of falsehood,—the consciousness of shame—”

“My son, my son!”

“But it is too true that I would gladly suffer all this and more, rather than add one sorrow to your crown of thorns. The disgrace of this hateful business, mother, shall never fall on *you*!—”

“Not even on my grave!” added Lady Greville, in a low voice. “Promise me, that when I am no more, you will respect your pledge?”—

“Trust to my good faith, without the exaction of further promises!” cried Lord Greville. “Thank heaven I am exonerated from the vileness of being a robber! My fortunes, you assure me, are mine by bequest. It is only the barren title of which I am defrauding Horace Greville,—Horace,—a fellow whom I have so thoroughly despised!—how little surmising that to *him* I ought to be in my turn an object of contempt!”—

“So far as in my power, I have not spared compensation,” observed Lady Greville. “Remember the noble income he receives from you,

as the nominal agent of your Yorkshire estates ; nay, it has been my condition with Lord Brooks, that he should have the preference over every other candidate for your boroughs, a concession which his own indolence fortunately rendered fruitless !”

Lord Greville was unable to restrain a gesture of despair ; as if the gradual development of the thousand falsehoods and impositions necessitated by his situation, was too much for his fortitude.

“ I, at least,” said he, “ will never profit by my position to impose myself on the country as a legislator. Of late, I had begun to look forward with ambition to parliamentary distinctions,—but this must never be !—*Nothing* must be that could embellish or bless my existence—No matter !—Mother, let us return to the house !—The night advances.—You have need of rest after all this emotion, all these trying retrospections.”—

“ No ; my mind is lightened of a burden !” cried Lady Greville. “ If you knew how long,

how ardently, I have desired this hour of confidence !”

“Your mind is lightened of a burden, because henceforward its weight is transferred to *me* !” said Greville, bitterly. “Be it so. I accept my cross, and must learn to bear it humbly.”

“My sorrow will have lost little of its heaviness,” faltered Lady Greville, as, rising slowly, she took his arm to return to the house, “if I am fated to perceive, as your manner forewarns me, that I have lost the affections of my son. My cares have been many,—Hugo, my tears bitter.—But the sharpness of the serpent’s tooth is yet to come, if I am to learn that all has been borne in vain, for the sake of an estranged and thankless child !”

The burst of tears which followed this afflicting apostrophe were shed upon the bosom of her son. Tenderly and pityingly did he strain her to his heart. Even at the moment of that

grievous trial, the noble-minded Greville beheld in her the first object of his life.—There would come a time hereafter to wrestle with the afflictions exclusively his own.—

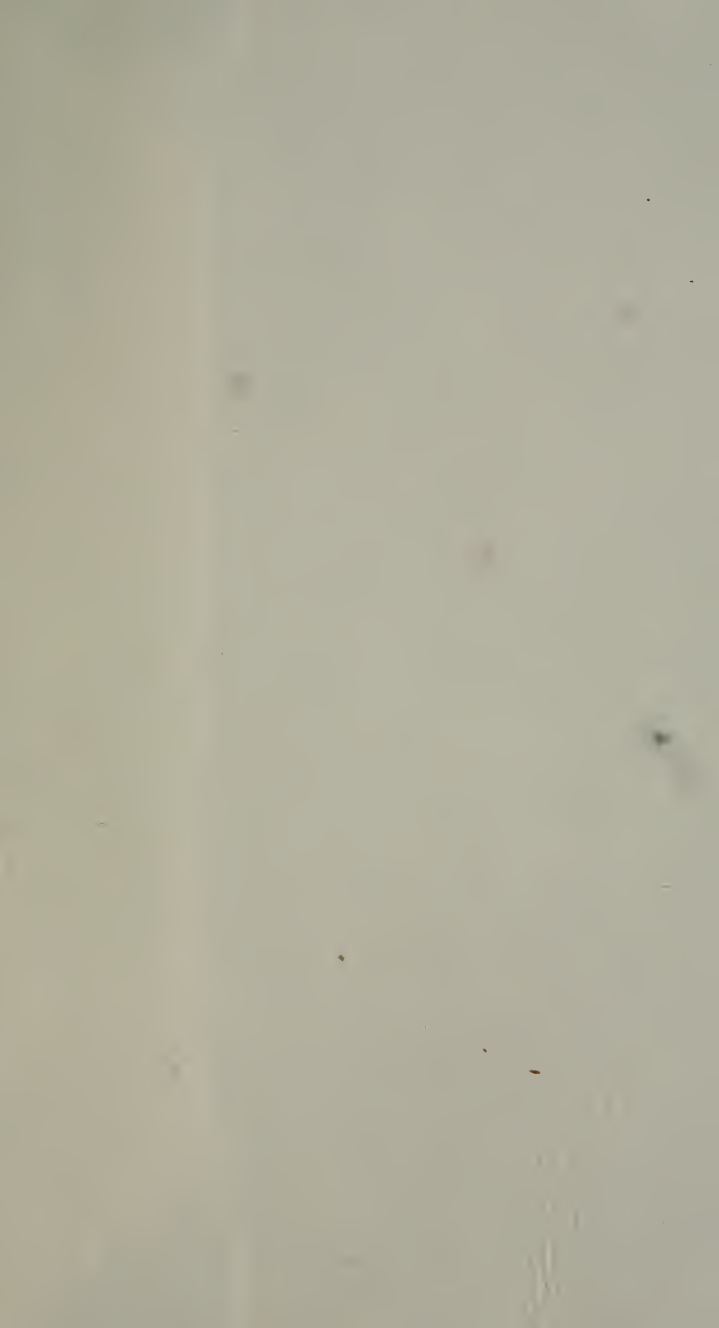
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